
THE
CHILDREN'S
OWN
SUNDAY BOOK

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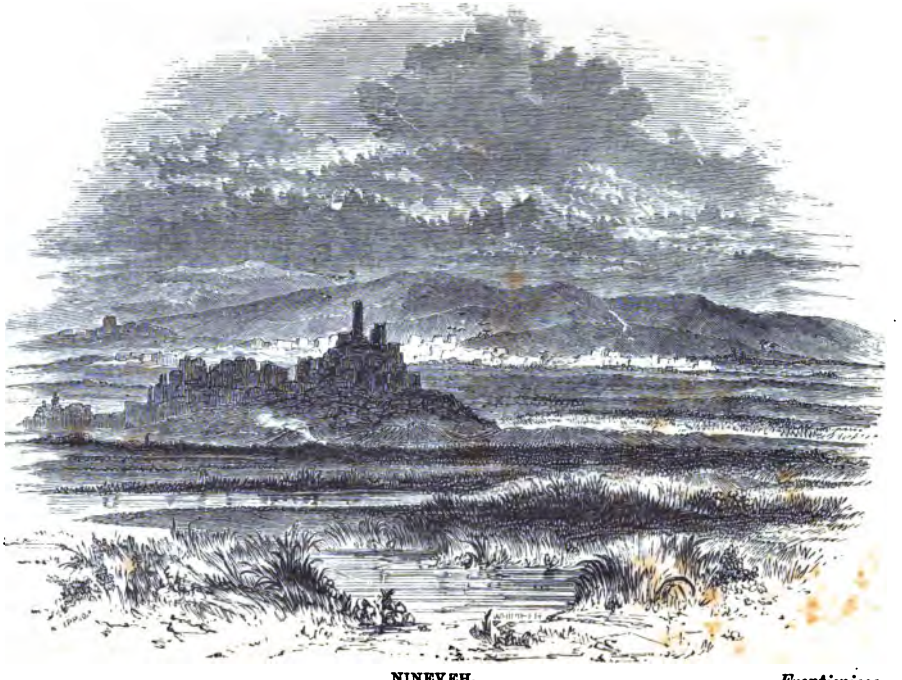

NINEVEH. *Frontispiece.*

THE

CHILDREN'S OWN SUNDAY BOOK.

BY

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PREFACE.

THE education of children, in whatever station of life they may happen to be placed, unless it be founded on the solid basis of religion, is of little worth; and with respect to the humbler classes, such a foundation is of the highest importance, not only as regards their spiritual welfare, but as the only means of helping them to resist the temptations to wrong-doing that constantly beset the path of poverty. This being the great object of *Sunday-school teaching*, it is presumed that any work tending to facilitate that object may be acceptable to those who engage in the very arduous but benevolent task of instructing in moral and religious duties, that youthful portion of the community, which, under the beneficial influence of such teaching, may become good and useful members of society.

It is with a sincere desire to assist in a good work that the present little volume is written, not as a regular compendium of *Scripture History*, but with a view of familiarizing children with its chief characters and incidents, so as to render the reading of the Bible attractive and interesting to them, which it scarcely is, unless they have some previous knowledge of it conveyed in a form suited to their comprehension.

JULIA CORNER.

1862.

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READING I.

THE LAND OF PROMISE.

"And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." *Genesis* xvii. 8.

In that part of Asia which is now called Palestine, or the Holy Land, there were, in ancient times, powerful kingdoms, containing many rich and magnificent cities; such as Babylon, Nineveh, Jerusalem, and others that are spoken of in the Bible, some of which are now in ruins, some dwindled down to poor villages, and others so completely destroyed that no one can tell to a certainty the exact spot on which they once stood. It is the same country that is called, in

the Book of Genesis, the Land of Canaan, and in the later Books of the Bible, "The Kingdom of Israel." In the days of our Saviour it was generally known by the name of Judea; and in later times, from having been the scene of the Lord's sojourn upon earth, it came to be called, by Christians, the Holy Land. Its earliest name of Canaan was derived from one of the grandsons of Noah, who obtained possession of the land by unfair means, as it was the rightful inheritance of the children of Shem, who was Noah's eldest son, whereas, Ham, the father of Canaan, was the second son of the patriarch, and not so good a man as either of his brothers. Noah, as we all know, was the founder of a new race of people, when all the descendants of Adam, except himself and his family, had perished in the great deluge. Then he and his three sons with their wives settled on the plains of Armenia, at the foot of Mount Ararat, where the ark, in which they were saved, had rested when the flood was over; and there they lived a pastoral life, that is, they were shepherds and husbandmen, feeding their flocks on the plain and cultivating the land.

They had many children born there, who, as they grew up to be men and women, married

with one another, and brought up large families in their turn, so that the vast plains which had been desolated by the flood, were in course of time again filled with people. As long as there was sufficient space where they first settled, for themselves and their flocks and herds, they kept together as one family; but at length they became so numerous that it was necessary to separate into clans, and then whole companies began to migrate to distant places, and establish colonies wherever they found plenty of good pasturage for their sheep and cattle. Thus the world, after the great deluge, was gradually re-peopled from Noah's three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Most of the eastern tribes are supposed to be descended from Shem; those of Africa from Ham, and the Europeans in general from Japheth.

At an early period, however, Canaan, one of the sons of Ham, had established himself and his people in the beautiful and fertile country known to us as the Holy Land, where they became a great and powerful nation.

But the Canaanites were a sinful people, who did not obey the word of God, nor worship him, but worshipped idols of their own creation; therefore it was decreed that a new nation

should arise among them, that would eventually drive them out of the land, and be established there as God's own people. The person selected by the Almighty Himself to be the founder of this future great and favoured nation, was Abraham, one of the descendants of Shem, a good and pious man then living at Ur, in Chaldea, the country around the city of Babylon; and when he received this mission God promised to give to him, and his family after him, the whole of the rich land of Canaan—a promise that was fulfilled at a later period, in a very wonderful manner, as will be seen in the history of Moses.

Thus Canaan came to be called the Land of Promise, and the nation founded there by Abraham, was that of the Hebrews, or the Jews, who are still a numerous and distinct people; for they have never mixed with other nations, although they have had no country of their own for nearly eighteen hundred years, but are scattered all over the world, and treated everywhere as strangers. It is not exactly known why they were called Hebrews; but some learned men think that it was because one of Abraham's ancestors, was named Heber, while others are of opinion that Abraham, when he left his

own country to settle in the Land of Promise, called himself and the people he took with him Hebrews, because that word, in his language, signified a removal from one place to another. They were not called Jews till a long time afterwards, when the kingdom of Judah was established; Judah being the father of one of the twelve tribes of Israel, and from him was derived the term Jew.

QUESTIONS ON READING I.

Where was the land of Canaan, and what is its present name?

Why is it called the Holy Land?

Who was Canaan?

Where did Noah and his family fix their abode after the great deluge?

How did they live?

Name the sons of Noah, and tell me what parts of the world are peopled by the descendants of each.

Why was it decreed that the Canaanites should be dispossessed of their land?

Who was Abraham, and what was his mission?

What was the promise of God made to Abraham?

READING II.

THE SETTLEMENT OF THE HEBREWS IN CANAAN.

It was about four hundred years after the flood when Abraham, at the Divine command, quitted his birth-place to settle in the Promised Land, accompanied by Sarah his wife, and Lot his nephew, who, as he had then no children, was looked upon as the heir to all his wealth; for he was a very rich man and maintained upwards of three hundred dependants, over whom he ruled with the authority of a sovereign prince, which, in those early times, was exercised as it is among the Arab tribes of the present day, the chief being considered as the father of his people, and that is why we speak of Abraham and his successors as the patriarchs.

His settlement in Canaan was not opposed by the people already established there; for there were large tracts of the country still uninhabited, and it was a law that he who first cultivated waste lands and dug wells so as to supply them with water, which was a great benefit in those

hot, dry countries, became the lord of the place he thus made habitable: so Abraham selected for his abode a beautiful spot, called the Vale of Mamre and sometimes the Vale of Hebron, because it was near a city of that name belonging to the Amorites, a tribe of Canaanites who called themselves Amorites from their first chief, whose name was Amor.

Abraham and his people set up their tents in this pleasant valley, and seem to have resembled, in the simplicity of their habits and manners, the Bedouin Arabs, who now live in the deserts of Arabia; so that modern travellers, who have visited the encampments of those wandering tribes, tell us they have often met with a venerable Bedouin chief whose appearance and manners reminded them forcibly of those ancient patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with whose histories the Bible has made us so familiar.

It was many years after Abraham first went to Canaan that his son Isaac was born, and he was then living at Beersheba, a place in the south of Palestine, about thirty miles from Hebron; for he had left the Vale of Mamre in consequence of the terrible calamity that destroyed the neighbouring cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and obtained possession of some

land, to which he gave the name of Beersheba, where he remained till his death.

Isaac succeeded to the vast possessions of his father Abraham, and, like him, was a great lord or prince in Canaan. He was married to his cousin Rebekah, who had been brought from a great distance to be his wife, because his parents were desirous that he should not form an alliance with any of the Canaanites.

He had two sons, Esau and Jacob, who were very unlike each other in disposition, for Esau was a bold, active youth, fond of hunting and warlike pursuits; while Jacob was of a mild and gentle spirit, preferring the quiet occupation of a shepherd to the enterprising life of a hunter and warrior. Esau left the land of Canaan, taking with him an abundance of wealth and a numerous train of followers, who were able and willing to fight his battles, and by their aid he took forcible possession of a rocky tract of country, now known as Arabia Petrea, but called, after Esau's conquest, Edom, or Idumea. There he founded the powerful nation of the Edomites and became a great prince; while Jacob, who went back to the Vale of Hebron, dwelt peaceably in the midst of his possessions, as his father and grandfather had

done before him, and brought up his twelve sons, from whom descended the twelve tribes of Israel that formed the great nation of the Hebrews, or Jews.

QUESTIONS ON READING II.

How long was it after the flood when Abraham was commanded to remove to Canaan?

What was his condition in life?

How was a title to land obtained in those days?

Where did Abraham first fix his abode?

Where was Isaac born?

Why had Abraham left the Vale of Hebron?

Who was Rebekah?

Name the two sons of Isaac.

What was the difference in point of character between Esau and Jacob?

How did Esau raise himself to greatness?

Did Jacob continue to reside at Beersheba?

What was his mode of life?

READING III.

JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN.

HEBRON, situated about twenty-two miles from Jerusalem, was one of the earliest-built cities in the world, and is still in existence, although it is now only a poor village, charmingly situated, however, in the midst of luxuriant vineyards. In the time of King David it was a large, handsome city, of sufficient importance to be made the capital of his kingdom for several years; and it is held in great veneration to this day on account of the sepulchre where the bodies of the illustrious patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, together with those of their wives, were deposited; and their tombs are still said to be preserved with care, although no one is permitted to go into the vault or cave supposed to contain them, over which a church was built in the early days of Christianity. In the pleasant and fertile vale of Hebron, which extends for several miles from the city, dwelt Joseph with

his family, in the midst of a host of dependants, servants, and slaves, who looked up to him as their prince, their priest, and their father. His tent was probably erected on the same spot as that of his grandfather Abraham, near a well overshadowed by the spreading branches of a large teberinth or turpentine tree, well known in after times as a station for the halt of caravans or travelling companies; for in those hot countries, where water and trees of sufficient magnitude to afford shelter from the scorching rays of the sun are luxuries not often met with, they are always highly valued, and it is most likely that the chief of a tribe would make choice of so inviting a spot for his own habitation. The sons of Jacob, although treated with great respect as young men of superior rank, had the charge of the cattle and sheep, and were constantly with them in the fields, such being the duties which men of large estates required of their sons in that simple and natural state of society. Jacob had two wives, which is not unlawful in the East, and they were sisters, one named Leah, the other Rachel. In course of time he had twelve sons, of whom Rachel was the mother of the two younger ones, Joseph and Benjamin; but she died soon after Benja-

min was born, Joseph being then a grown-up, youth, fifteen or sixteen years of age.

Jacob had loved Rachel much better than Leah, and Joseph was his favourite son, partly on that account perhaps, and partly because he was of a very amiable temper and more talented than any of the rest; but above all, because he was a very dutiful and obedient child, which is not only pleasing to parents, but to God also. His brothers, however, were jealous of the preference shown by their father; and it is remarkable that this jealousy was the beginning of a chain of circumstances that led in the end to the fulfilment of God's promise respecting the land of Canaan, where the posterity of Abraham was, according to that promise, to become a great nation, and to possess all the country. There was not at this period, nor for a long time afterwards, the least prospect that such would be the case; but what God has ordained is sure to come to pass, however improbable it may appear; and we may therefore suppose that the ill-treatment experienced by Joseph from his brethren was permitted by the Almighty for the purpose of accomplishing his divine will. The enmity of those young men was excited, in the first instance, by the indul-

gences lavished on their younger brother, who was often kept at home while they were sent to their daily labour in the fields, which they considered unjust; besides which, he was more richly clothed, probably because his father, who was then a very old man, delighted in seeing him thus adorned, as he was a remarkably beautiful boy. But what gave the greatest offence to the elder sons of Jacob was, that Joseph had a prophetic dream, in which it seemed that he was destined to rise to great eminence, and that they would all have to do homage to him as a superior. In the hope of preventing the accomplishment of this prophecy, they resolved to put him to death; and took an opportunity one day when he was sent to them with a message from his father, and had followed them to a long distance from his home, to throw him into a deep pit, where they would have left him to die of hunger, if it had not been for a providential circumstance that induced them to change their intentions, and instead of leaving him there to perish for want of food, to sell him for a slave; which no doubt seemed as cruel to him at the time, although it turned out happily at last. Just as they were going away from the spot, a caravan of merchants, on their way to

Egypt, chanced to come by, and readily agreed to purchase the unhappy youth, being quite sure that they should get a large sum of money for him in Egypt, where bondsmen were highly valued, as slavery was not a general custom, and it was only a few of the richest and grandest people who had any slaves among their servants. The grief and horror of the poor boy, on finding that he was to be carried far away from his indulgent father and his beloved home, may readily be imagined; but to his agonized prayers and entreaties his brethren turned a deaf ear, and he was compelled to submit to his fate.

In this portion of the history of Joseph, we have a striking example of the influence of envy over those who are so foolish or so wicked as to indulge that hateful passion, which never finds a place in a generous mind, but is always a sign of a mean spirit and a weak understanding. Amongst brethren, especially, any signs of envy or jealousy are so displeasing to every one, that they who exhibit such unamiable feelings must not expect to gain esteem or applause. It may happen that one brother is superior to the rest, either in temper, in disposition, or in manners; and if so, it is natural that he should be liked the best. Then, let not the others,

like Joseph's brethren, be angry with him on that account; but rather let them try to resemble him, that they also may be loved and admired as well as he.

The sons of Jacob do not appear to have been bad men in any other respect than that of envying their younger brother; yet, by suffering this feeling to obtain the mastery over them, they were tempted to commit a great crime, and would even have been guilty of a still greater one, if Providence had not interposed by causing the merchants to arrive on the spot, just at the moment when they were about to abandon the wretched youth to his fate. And is it to be supposed they were the happier for what they had done? Certainly not: for no one can be happy with a self-accusing conscience; and they could not behold, day after day, their venerable sire bowed down with sorrow, and mourning for the loss of his favourite child, without feeling some pangs of remorse; while every kind word he spoke to them, must have sounded in their ears like a reproach for the deception they had been guilty of, in order to make him believe the boy was dead.

QUESTIONS ON READING III.

How many sons had Jacob, and what was their occupation?

Who were Jacob's wives?

Which of his sons were the children of Rachel?

Why was Joseph his father's favourite?

What misfortune befel Joseph in consequence of his father's preference?

READING IV.

JOSEPH'S RISING FORTUNE.

THE merchants who had bought Joseph of his brothers, were Arabians travelling to Egypt with a long train of camels, some of which they rode, while others were laden with their merchandize, which consisted of spices and perfumes, and other valuable commodities for which they were sure to find a ready market in that country, for the Egyptians were, in those times, the richest, as well as the most civilized people in the world, and were no less famous for the wealth and splendour of their cities than for the beauty and excellence of their manufactures, which they used to exchange for the natural productions of other countries, such as gold, ivory, frankincense, myrrh, and wine. Their principal manufactures were fine linen, robes, and carpets; but they grew abundance of corn, in which they traded largely; for in consequence of the periodical overflowings of the Nile, the land was extremely fertile, as far as it was

watered by that great river; so that there was often plenty of corn in Egypt when it was scarce elsewhere.

To Egypt, then, the merchants in question were going; and although, as before mentioned, it was not a common practice among the Egyptians to traffic in slaves, yet these traders must have been well aware they should find a purchaser for the beautiful youth fate had thrown in their way, since they did not hesitate to give a sum of money for him, in the full expectation of making a profit by the transaction. Nor were they disappointed; for no sooner had they reached their destination, than they sold him to Potiphar, one of the principal lords of the court, called in the Bible, "the captain of the guard," but, no doubt, a person of the highest rank, as it appears he lived in a very magnificent style.

We are not told in what city he resided, although it must have been that in which the court was held at the time; but Egypt had more than one great capital, and the seat of government was changed at different periods. The most celebrated of the ancient Egyptian capitals was Memphis, spoken of as the "proud city of the Pharaohs," Pharaoh being a general name for the kings of Egypt, to which the

proper name was added, to distinguish one from another, as Pharaoh Osirtasen, Pharaoh Sesostris, Pharaoh Necho, &c.; therefore it is supposed that the word Pharaoh might possibly mean *king*. Memphis stood either on, or very near the spot now occupied by the city of Cairo, and it was most probably there that Joseph served as a domestic slave in the house of Potiphar, his master, where his gentle manners and good conduct soon made him a great favourite, and he was promoted by degrees to a high office in the household. It is plain, therefore, that, instead of repining at his lot, he put his trust in God and submitted with patience to the Divine will; and truly he had his reward, as all will have, who do their duty in that state of life to which it hath pleased God to call them. Some years had gone by when not from any misconduct, but owing to some false accusation made against him, he fell into disgrace with his lord, and was sent to prison, where he gained the respect of his fellow-prisoners by his superior wisdom and intelligence, especially as regarded the interpretation of dreams, from which he foretold truly what would happen to them. There can be no doubt this faculty was given to him for the purpose of working out the designs of

Providence, since it was one of the chain of circumstances that led to the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham. Joseph was still a prisoner when Pharaoh the king had a strange dream that troubled his mind very much, and being told there was a Hebrew slave in the prison who could interpret dreams, he sent for him, and desired him to tell the meaning of his vision. Then we read in the Bible how Joseph foretold that for seven years the harvests would be so plentiful that there would be far more corn than would be needed; but afterwards, for seven years, the earth would be barren for want of water, and would yield no crops at all; therefore he advised the king to choose a wise minister who would take measures to provide against the time of famine by obliging the people to save half their corn during the years of plenty; and the king was so pleased with this advice, that he at once appointed Joseph his chief minister, and gave him the signet ring which was a token of his high office.

QUESTIONS ON READING IV.

What were the people to whom Joseph was sold?

What were the principal manufactures of the Egyptians at this period?

How was the land rendered fertile?

How was Joseph disposed of when he reached Egypt?

Where was the city of Memphis situated?

How did Joseph bear his servitude?

What misfortune befel him?

How did his imprisonment lead to his future fortune?

What was Joseph's interpretation of Pharoah's dream?

How did Pharaoh show his confidence in Joseph's wisdom?

READING V.

THE FAMINE.

"And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man." *Genesis* xxxix. 2.

JOSEPH had now met with a rich reward for his piety and good conduct through all the severe trials he had experienced; and although his promotion was sudden, we cannot doubt that the noble-minded Pharaoh was well satisfied of his virtuous principles and great ability, before he intrusted him with so important an office as that of the government of the kingdom. We may, therefore, suppose that the same Divine Power which enabled Joseph to interpret Pharaoh's dream, likewise gave the king that clear perception of his merits that led at once to his exaltation. What else, indeed, could have inspired the ruler of Egypt with that unbounded confidence which induced him to bestow a degree of power, almost unlimited, on one who was till then a stranger to him, and whose fidelity was yet untried?

By investing the newly-appointed minister with his seal-ring, Pharaoh gave him an authority nearly equal to his own, since all persons throughout the kingdom were obliged to obey any mandate that was written in the king's name and sealed with this seal; consequently, whoever was in possession of it had the means of acting with absolute power, and a sad thing it would have been for the people had it been given into the hands of an unjust or tyrannical person. But we never hear of any one instance in which Joseph made a bad use of the power intrusted to him; for his unexpected prosperity did not render him proud or vain, but he discharged all the duties of his high station with the same propriety that he had performed those of his humbler condition, and preserved the esteem and confidence of his royal patron, while he gained the affection and respect of all classes of the people by his justice, his moderation, and his affability. Instead of looking upon him with jealousy, as an ambitious foreigner who had usurped undue power, the Egyptians learned to regard him in the light of a benefactor; and such indeed he proved to be, for it was by his wise precautions that they were saved from perishing of want during that

severe famine, which happened as he had predicted.

As long as the harvests were plentiful, he made an annual progress through the country, and bought of the farmers all the corn they could spare, permitting them to reserve only so much as was sufficient for the year's consumption, and thus he prevented them from being wasteful, as people are in general but too apt to be while they are surrounded with abundance; forgetting that a reverse of fortune may come, and they may then vainly wish they had laid by that which they have squandered away in thoughtless extravagance. The farmers readily sold their corn at a very low price while it was so plentiful; and thus large quantities were stored up in the king's granaries and kept there till the seven abundant years were gone and the scarcity commenced, as God had foreshown in Pharaoh's dreams.

Then the people began to feel how much they were indebted to the care of the wise minister who had provided against the evil day; for, although the crops failed year after year, there was enough corn in store to supply, with good management, not only the whole population of Egypt, but people of other nations also; for the

famine was severely felt in all the neighbouring parts of Asia, especially in Canaan, where Joseph's family still resided. The wealth of the royal treasury was greatly augmented by the gold which foreigners were glad to exchange for bread; and thus the riches and power of the sovereign were increased by the very benefits he was enabled, by means of his excellent and enlightened minister, to confer.

The measures of Joseph, however, introduced a kind of feudal system into Egypt, which does not seem to have existed before; for when the people had spent all their money in the purchase of corn, and still found that the earth yielded nothing, they began to sell their land, having no other means of continuing to obtain food; and then Joseph advised the king to buy up all the land, and restore it to the former owners on condition of always receiving one-fifth of the produce; so that he became, in fact, the sole landed proprietor, and the people passed from the condition of free land-owners into that of vassals or feudal tenants. The priests alone retained property in land, for they were a high and privileged class, so that the king himself could not interfere with their rights; therefore, they were exempt from the tax or tribute im-

posed on the rest of the Egyptian population. It cannot be denied that Joseph's policy with regard to the landed property was the means of depriving the people of their ancient freedom; but, on the other hand, he conferred on them the greatest benefits; he saved the whole nation from the worst of calamities, that of perishing for want; and, it is quite certain, by his extreme popularity and the high esteem in which he was held all over the country, that his conduct could never have been regarded as in any way oppressive.

QUESTIONS ON READING V.

By what act did Pharoah give Joseph unlimited authority in the state?

What powers were vested in the seal-ring?

How did Joseph use the power intrusted to him?

What measures did he take to save the people from the miseries of famine?

What advantage did the king derive from his minister's proceedings?

How was the political condition of the Egyptian people changed in consequence of the scarcity?

Which class of the population retained their landed property?

JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN. *Page* 27.

READING VI.

SETTLEMENT OF THE ISRAELITES IN EGYPT.

It was while the famine was raging, not only in Egypt, but in Palestine and Arabia also, that Jacob, who was now a very old man, one hundred and thirty years of age, hearing there was corn to be bought in Egypt, sent his sons to purchase a good supply at any price, for he had plenty of gold and silver, but that was of little use without food, and the family was starving for want of bread. Now, in order to obtain corn from the royal stores, it was necessary to get an order from the chief minister, who was then living in princely splendour, at Memphis, as is generally supposed. His abode was a magnificent palace, where he was surrounded by his guards and officers of state, and his wealth and influence had been greatly increased by his marriage with the daughter of Potiphera, the high-priest of the great temple of On. He was not called by his Hebrew name of Joseph, but by some grand title, so that his brothers had no

idea that, in Pharaoh's favourite minister—the man before whom every one bowed down to the earth with profound respect; who was superior in power and dignity to all but the king himself—they should behold the brother whom they had so cruelly sold into slavery. How beautiful is the description given in the Bible of their repentance, and Joseph's forgiveness! How truly generous was the conduct of that noble-minded man who, now that he had it in his power to revenge the injuries he had received at their hands, took his erring brothers to his arms and bestowed all manner of benefits upon them. All his old affections and the memory of his boyhood, which had been weakened by time and the cares of state, were revived by this unexpected meeting; and when he heard that his father was still alive, he felt a longing desire to see him again; but as the duties of his high office prevented him from making a journey to Canaan, he used his interest with Pharaoh to obtain a grant of land in Egypt for Jacob and all his family, that they might come to live in that country and share in the prosperity with which God had blessed him. The king, in consequence of the great esteem he had for his wise and excellent minister, assigned to them the

whole of the district of Goshen, a part of Lower Egypt bordering on Arabia, where there was good pasturage for their cattle and sheep; and he sent a great number of carriages for them, that they might travel in a manner befitting the relatives of a person of Joseph's rank and consequence. These conveyances are called waggons in the Bible, and probably they bore some resemblance to our tilted waggons, but they were, no doubt, the best travelling carriages then in use. The arrival of Jacob and his family in Egypt is one of the most interesting and memorable events recorded in Scripture history. Nothing can be more affecting than the meeting between the aged father and that beloved son, whose supposed death he had mourned for so many years. Simply and beautifully is it told in Scriptural language. "And Israel said unto Joseph, 'Now let me die, since I have seen thy face; because thou art yet alive.'" Jacob, as before mentioned, was at this time one hundred and thirty years old, and he had, by the command of God, taken the name of Israel; therefore his sons and daughters and all their descendants were called Israelites, or children of Israel, as well as Hebrews.

QUESTIONS ON READING VI.

Who was Joseph's wife?

Why did Joseph's brethren go to Egypt?

How did Joseph receive them?

What favour was granted by Pharoah to Joseph's family?

What part of Egypt was assigned for the settlement of the Israelites?

How was their removal from Canaan conducted?

What was the age of Jacob when he came to settle in Egypt?

Why were the Hebrews called also Israelites?

READING VII.

DEATH OF JACOB.

THE Egyptians were at this period far more advanced in civilization than any other people, and skilled in many arts that were unknown to the nations around them. They were divided into four castes or classes; the highest caste being the priests, the second class consisting of the soldiers and husbandmen, the third and fourth including artizans, mechanics, and labourers of all kinds. To keep up this separation, no man was allowed to marry out of his own class, and could never change his occupation or the station of life in which he was born. All the highest professions were practised by the priesthood, who were physicians, architects, judges, and in fact everything that required much learning. Their buildings were very grand, and some of their cities of considerable extent and importance. Thebes was a very handsome city, and its ruins may still be traced for nine miles on both sides of the Nile, where

the traveller may behold the interesting remains of magnificent temples, gigantic statues, and other relics that prove the high state of civilization that existed in Egypt even as early as the time of Abraham. Israel and his numerous family, seventy in number, had now entirely abandoned the Land of Promise, and brought away all their property, to settle in a foreign country. They set up their tents, and lived according to their own customs, in the district allotted to them, not mixing with the Egyptians, who had a strong prejudice against the pastoral tribes of Arabia and Palestine, although the high position held by Joseph in the state, together with the favour and protection of the sovereign, secured a degree of respect for this particular family that would not have been shown towards any other strangers coming from those countries and leading a shepherd's life, for this was looked upon in Egypt as a very low and servile occupation. Jacob lived seventeen years after his settlement at Goshen, during which period Joseph paid him the most dutiful and affectionate attention, and was with him when he died, feeling truly grateful to that Almighty Power who had given him the means of affording comfort and happiness to his vene-

able parent through the last stage of his existence.

The funeral of Jacob was performed with great magnificence, and a public mourning was observed throughout Egypt for the space of seventy days, the same period as it was customary to mourn publicly for the death of a king; during which the temples were closed, no festivals were held, and people went about making loud lamentations.

The body of Jacob was embalmed with the same cost and care as the bodies of royal personages, and was then conveyed in great state to the land of his fathers, and buried by the side of Abraham and Isaac in the family vault at Hebron. The funeral procession consisted of all his sons, with the king's guards, the principal officers of the royal household, and a great number of distinguished Egyptians, with a numerous train of carriages and horses. Such were the honours paid to the father of Joseph, who, when he had laid his beloved parent in the tomb, returned to Egypt, where he continued to hold the high position of chief-minister until his death. He lived to the age of one hundred and ten, beloved and respected by every one. His death took place fifty-four

years after that of his father, in the year B.C. 1635, when the Israelites, who still retained the land of Goshen, embalmed his body and enclosed it in a sarcophagus, which they did not place in a tomb, but kept among them unburied for more than two hundred years, in consequence of his dying request that he might be buried by the side of his father, in his own land. He left two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who must both have been then far advanced in years, as they were grown-up boys when their grandfather, Jacob, first came to Egypt.

QUESTIONS ON READING VII.

What was the social condition of the Egyptians in the time of Joseph?

How many classes of people were there?

Describe the four classes.

How was this separation maintained?

What professions belonged exclusively to the priesthood?

Where was the city of Thebes situated?

What was the number of Jacob's family when he settled in Egypt?

What mode of life did they adopt?

How long did Jacob live after he left his own country?

What honours were paid him after his decease?
Where was he buried?
How was his funeral conducted?
When did Joseph die?
Was he buried in Egypt?
What became of his remains?
How many sons did he leave, and what were their names?

READING VIII.

BIRTH OF MOSES.

In course of time the Hebrews became a very numerous and wealthy people in Egypt, where they continued, after the death of Joseph, to occupy that part of the country first assigned to them, and no doubt enjoyed a considerable degree of favour and protection as long as the crown remained in the same family; but we read in Scripture, that at length "There arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph." By which it appears that a new race of sovereigns came to the throne; perhaps, by invasion and conquest, but that is not known. At any rate, the new kings, whoever they might be, were very tyrannical, and looked with jealous eyes on the Israelites, who were then sufficiently rich and powerful to be dangerous enemies, if they should make any attempt to effect a revolution. This fear caused them to be much oppressed, till at last they were reduced to a state of servitude, and compelled to do all kinds of work for the government; certain

officers being appointed over them to see that they performed their daily tasks. They were taken from their own occupations to dig canals, build walls round the cities, make bricks, and, in short, to labour at all the public works that were undertaken at that period; and as they remained in Egypt about 145 years from the death of Joseph, several generations must have passed their whole lives in slavery. It is not known whether any of the pyramids were among the works of the Israelites, as the date of their erection is uncertain; but it is thought highly probable that they were engaged in the building of those remarkable structures, which there is great reason to believe were founded while the country was under the dominion of foreign princes. At length it was prophesied to the king that a child would soon be born among the Hebrews, who was destined to release that people from bondage, and exalt them into a great nation; on which the tyrant issued a decree that all the male infants of the Israelites should be destroyed as soon as they came into the world; a cruel mandate, similar to that which Herod sent forth against the children of Judæa at the time of our Saviour's birth.

It was certainly the height of presumption,

both in Herod and Pharaoh, to imagine they would be able to counteract the designs of the Almighty by anything they could do; and the result shows how unavailing is all the power of man when exercised in opposition to the will of the Lord. It was a dreadful thing for the people to be obliged to sacrifice their own children, and it caused them far more sorrow than all they suffered from the hardships of slavery; yet they dared not disobey the stern command, which is a melancholy proof of the complete state of subjection to which they were reduced; yet, though hundreds of innocent babes were drowned in the Nile, or otherwise destroyed, through the fear and jealousy of the wicked monarch, that chosen one who was to deliver the Israelites from bondage, and conduct them to the land of promise, was preserved by the miraculous intervention of a Divine Providence, and lived to fulfil his important mission.

A Hebrew named Amram, a man of high rank among his own nation, who had a daughter eleven years of age, called Miriam, and a son about three, whose name was Aaron, became, soon after Pharaoh's decree against new-born infants, the father of a second boy, a child of remarkable strength and beauty, and the hearts

of the parents were almost broken when they looked at this lovely babe, so healthy, so full of life and spirit, and thought that it must be consigned to an untimely grave. For three months they contrived to hide from the king's emissaries the knowledge of his birth; but, at length, finding concealment no longer possible, they resolved to confide him to the care of Providence, well knowing that nothing but a miracle could save him from the threatened danger, and that their only hope was in trusting that God would send some means of deliverance. On the banks of the Nile there grows a species of reed called papyrus, which contains a sort of pith, that was used in ancient times for making paper. These reeds, which are called in the Bible, bulrushes, are so large and strong that all the boats on the Nile were made of them, and coated with pitch to render them waterproof. A little boat or cradle of this kind was made by Amram and his wife, who, with many fervent prayers to God, laid their infant within it, and placed it among the weeds by the side of the river, sending their daughter Miriam to watch what became of it. It had not been there long, when Thermutis, the king's daughter, came with several female attendants to walk by the water-

side, and, seeing the cradle lying among the weeds, she sent some of her maidens to see what was in it; and they brought her the child, whose extreme beauty and melancholy condition excited at once her pity and admiration. "Alas!" she said, "it is one of the unfortunate Hebrew children;" and she looked upon it with such tender compassion that Miriam was encouraged to approach, and ask her if she should run and find a nurse for the baby, not saying it was her own little brother. Now this princess was a married lady, but had no children, so she determined to save this little foundling, and adopt him as her son; therefore she desired Miriam to fetch the nurse she spoke of; on which the delighted girl ran home to her mother, who, with joy and gratitude to the Great Disposer of all human events, received her own child back to her arms as a stranger. The princess gave him the name of Moses, which, in the language of the Egyptians, signified one who is saved from the water; and he became that great Prophet who received the ten commandments from God on Mount Sinai, and made laws for the children of Israel, which have continued to be their laws to this very day. Moses was the great-grandson of Levi,

one of the twelve sons of Jacob, and when he became chief ruler of the Israelites, he consecrated the tribe of Levi; that is, he ordained that in all times to come those who belonged to that particular branch of Jacob's family should form a religious order, and we find them often mentioned in the New Testament under the name of Levites; but they were not all priests, for the priesthood was confined to the family of Aaron, the eldest brother of Moses, and was hereditary.

QUESTIONS ON READING VIII.

What happened to the children of Israel after the death of Joseph?

What kind of labour was forced upon them?

What was the prophecy respecting their release from bondage?

How did the king endeavour to prevent the accomplishment of this prophecy?

Who was the father of Moses?

Who was Miriam?

Who was Aaron?

How long was the birth of the infant Moses concealed?

What did his parents do in the hope of saving him?

What became of the child?

Why was he named Moses?

What was his ultimate destiny?

READING IX.

HISTORY OF MOSES—CONTINUED.

THE Egyptian princess became so fond of Moses that, in time, she ventured to present him to her father as her adopted son, saying she had provided him with a successor to the throne, in case she should not have any children of her own; on which the king received the boy very graciously, even condescending to place the crown playfully upon his head; at least so we are told by the ancient historian of the Jews; who adds that the child tore the diadem from his brow and trampled it beneath his infantile feet. However, for the sake of the princess, Pharaoh treated him kindly, and he was brought up at the court with great care, being instructed in all the learning of the age; and in the course of time he was appointed commander of the armies. He conducted, with great success, a war against the Ethiopians, who invaded the country; and he continued to hold a high rank and to enjoy the most distinguished honours at

MOSES SLAYING THE EGYPTIAN. *Page* 42.

the court of Egypt until he was forty years of age, when he drew upon himself the displeasure of the king by showing a favourable disposition towards his oppressed countrymen, and was obliged to leave the country secretly and in haste, in order to avoid the fatal consequences of the tyrant's wrath. He fled to the land of Midian, a part it is supposed of Arabia Petrea, the road to which lay through hot sandy deserts, where a lonely traveller was in great danger of perishing for want of water to quench his burning thirst; but with courage and perseverance the fugitive journeyed on till he came near a city of Midian, on the borders of the Red Sea, where he sat down by the side of a well to rest and refresh himself. He had not been sitting there long, when several young maidens came to get water for their flocks, which they drew out of the well, by means of a rope and bucket of goat-skin, into troughs, that the sheep might drink easily; but while thus employed, there came some shepherds, who began to dispute with them about taking the water; on which Moses stood up in their defence, and compelled the men to let them have as much as they wanted. Quarrels, and even battles, were not uncommon among the people of those countries

for possession of the wells; therefore the conduct of the shepherds was nothing remarkable, except that they must have been very rough and uncouth in their nature, to contend with helpless females, who could not have defended themselves had it not been for the aid of the valiant stranger, who drove away the rude assailants, and helped them to draw water, until they had filled the stone troughs that stood about the well. These young women happened to be persons of high rank; for they were the daughters of Jethro, the priest of Midian, a man of great wealth and consideration in the land; nor were his daughters the less respected because they minded their father's sheep and goats, for such was the custom of the country, therefore it was no degradation to them.

On their return home they related to their father all that had happened at the well, speaking so highly in praise of the stranger who had assisted them, that Jethro sent for Moses to his house, where the wanderer found an asylum and a happy home. He was appointed chief shepherd to his host, an office of high trust and dignity among a people whose principal property was in flocks and herds; and

soon afterwards he married one of Jethro's daughters.

Moses must have spent nearly forty years with this family, during which time the king of Egypt whom he had known, and his successor also, both died, and the famous Pharaoh Sesostris, he who was afterwards drowned in the Red Sea, had come to the throne. But these changes had made no difference in the miserable condition of the Israelites, who were still held in bondage, and kept to all sorts of hard labour, for which they do not appear to have received any compensation beyond such food and raiment as was usually given to slaves. It may be supposed that Moses would often reflect with sorrow on their unhappy lot, and endeavour to think of some means for their deliverance; but this was not to be effected without a miracle; for how was a single person, without any army at his command, or any powerful friends who would assist him in such a bold undertaking, to overcome the mighty sovereign of Egypt, and oblige him to liberate a people whose services were valuable to him, and whom it was his will and pleasure to hold in slavery? Yet all this, however impracticable it might have appeared to him, he was enabled to accomplish by Divine

aid, which shows that we ought never to mistrust the power of the Most High, but to remember, in all our difficulties and dangers, that nothing is impossible with God.

QUESTIONS ON READING IX.

How was Moses brought up?
What rank did he hold at the court of Pharoah?
How long did he remain there?
How did he give offence to the king?
What did he do in consequence?
Where did he stop to rest?
What happened there?
Who were the young women he assisted?
How was he rewarded for his valour?
Whom did he marry?
How long did he remain with his wife's family at Midian?
Who was then king of Egypt?
What was the condition of the Israelites at that time?

READING X.

THE CALL OF MOSES.

THE time had now arrived when the Israelites were to be released from slavery, and brought out of Egypt; for God was about to fulfil his promise respecting the land of Canaan, where they were to become a free and powerful people; and Moses was at length called to the great work for which he had been so miraculously preserved in his infancy. He was, at this time, about eighty years of age; yet he is not to be considered as an old man, for the term of existence was longer in those days than it is now, and a man of eighty was scarcely past the prime of life, and might still be in possession of the full strength and vigour of middle age. Moses did not yet know the high calling to which he was destined. He had no thought then of returning to Egypt; he had no thought of being other than what he was, till, one day, as he was sitting at the foot of Mount Horeb, watching his flocks, he saw what appeared to him to be a

thorn bush on fire; but he soon perceived that the seeming fire did not burn the bush or even scorch its leaves. In great amaze he gazed on the phenomenon before him; but his wonder was mingled with fear on hearing a voice calling him by name from the midst of this glorious light, for it was a light that indicated the presence of God. The spot supposed to be that where the miracle occurred, is to this day revered as holy ground, and is guarded by a body of Greek monks, who inhabit a convent at the base of a mountain, believed to be the same that is called in the Bible, Horeb, or Sinai, where Moses fed the flocks of Jethro his father-in-law, and where the commandments were afterwards delivered to him. From the midst of the blazing bush, God instructed him what he should do to release the Israelites from bondage; and He said, "I am come to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large; a land flowing with milk and honey."

Honey was one of the most plenteous among the natural productions of Palestine, and a favourite article of food, being often made into thin cakes, which were much liked and eaten by the children. Wild bees were very nume-

rous all over the country. They made their hives of earth in the woods or in the clefts of the rocks; and as the fields were covered with a profusion of sweet-smelling flowers that grew among the grass, the busy insects were amply supplied with the means of pursuing their industrious labours. It was from the richness of the soil that the land of Canaan came to be called Palestine, or the land of shepherds; and as the pastures were good, the goats, being well fed, yielded an abundance of excellent milk; so that this beautiful country might well be called "a land flowing with milk and honey."

Moses did not doubt the power of the Lord, but he doubted his own ability to accomplish the task assigned to him, of obliging the king of Egypt to let the Israelites leave the country; therefore, in order to inspire him with confidence, a sign was given him, by which he might know that it was no illusion, but that he really stood in the Divine presence, and was holding converse with the Almighty. The mysterious voice from the midst of the flaming bush desired him to throw his rod, that is his shepherd's crook, or staff, upon the ground, when, to his great surprise, it turned into a serpent, and crawled towards him, on which he

drew back in terror; but the Lord commanded him to take it in his hand again, and when he had done so, he found it was a staff as before. Thus, Moses was the first to whom God gave the power of performing miracles, a power afterwards bestowed on all the great prophets as well as on the apostles of Christ; and from that moment the Spirit of God was in him, and he was inspired with more than human knowledge, so that he no longer feared to undertake the mission to which he was appointed. He set out for Egypt, taking with him his wife and children; but these, after a time, he sent back again, probably fearing that their safety might be endangered if they continued with him during his anticipated contest with the tyrant who then occupied the throne.

On reaching the confines of Egypt, he saw his brother Aaron coming to meet him, for the Lord had appeared to him also, and informed him that Moses was returning for the purpose of liberating the Israelites, at the same time instructing him how to assist in the great enterprise. So the brothers met after a separation of forty years, and they proceeded together to the court of Pharaoh, to whom Moses made himself known; at the same time requesting, in consi-

deration for the services he had formerly rendered in the war with the Ethiopians, that the king would grant the Hebrews a holiday that they might hold a festival in the desert, and make sacrifices to the Lord according to the rites of their religion. But the king refused, saying, it was indolence, and not a sense of religious duty, that made the people desire this indulgence: therefore he commanded that they should be compelled to work even harder than before.

The brothers again presented themselves before Pharaoh, and boldly repeated their demand; declaring that if he persisted in his refusal, the country would certainly be afflicted with heavy calamities, as it was the will of God, that the children of Israel should be allowed to worship Him according to their custom; and they performed signs and wonders in the presence of the king, to show that they were no impostors but real messengers of the Lord; yet Pharaoh heeded them not, for he and all the Egyptians were heathens, and did not worship the true God. This opposition brought down the wrath of Heaven upon the whole country, which began to suffer from the dreadful calamities threatened by Moses. The rivers assumed the appearance

of blood, and great distress was occasioned by the want of water; the earth was covered with millions of frogs, which consumed its produce; hail-storms, such as were never known before, broke down the fruit trees and caused fearful destruction; all the cattle of the Egyptians died in one night; and other plagues clearly manifested the anger of the Lord: yet the wilful tyrant persisted in his opposition to the Divine command, nor would he believe that all these misfortunes were owing to his own senseless conduct. It might, indeed, have brought conviction to his mind that each of these visitations was foretold to him by Moses before it came to pass: and sometimes, in the midst of the suffering, he did give a reluctant consent that the Hebrews should depart; but no sooner did the plague cease in consequence, than he withdrew his permission, and thus brought some new calamity upon the land.

He was probably afraid that if he gave the Hebrews permission to take a holiday for three days, and go away into the desert, they might never return; and that would have been a serious loss to him, for their services as bond labourers were extremely valuable, besides which they paid tribute to the state from the produce

of their own lands; therefore guards were always stationed on the confines of Goshen to prevent them from leaving the country, and spies were always on the watch to detect any conspiracy for that purpose. Their numbers amounted at this time to about two millions and a half, and they were divided into twelve tribes, or clans, each clan bearing the name of that one of Israel's twelve sons from whom it was descended, as the Reubenites from Reuben, the Benjamites from Benjamin, the Levites from Levi, &c. But the tribe of Joseph was not called after his name, but was formed of the two families of his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. They had been taught all the useful arts that were known in Egypt, so that they could work at all manner of trades, such as weaving, dyeing, cutting and polishing precious stones, doing embroidery, working in metals, and were also better carpenters, masons, and builders, than the Egyptians themselves. All those who were living in the time of Moses had been born in slavery, so that they did not feel their degradation so much as their forefathers had done, who were reduced from the condition of freemen to a state of bondage. Moses had therefore some trouble to overcome the fears

they felt of leaving the country without the consent of their rulers; but it was the will of God that they should be established in Canaan, and become a great nation there, that His promise to Abraham might be fulfilled: "And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God."

QUESTIONS ON READING X.

What age was Moses when he was called to deliver the Israelites from bondage?

How was the Divine will made known to him?

Repeat the words spoken to Moses from the burning bush.

Why was Canaan called "a land flowing with milk and honey?"

By what miraculous token was Moses convinced of the Divine presence?

How did he commence his difficult task?

Who met him on his way to Egypt?

What was the first step taken by Moses and Aaron towards the liberation of the Israelites?

How did Pharaoh treat their petition?

How did they act on this refusal?

What were the consequences of Pharaoh's obduracy?

Why was the king so unwilling to let the Hebrews depart out of the land?

What precautions were taken to keep them in Egypt?

What was their number at this time, and how were they divided?

What arts and trades did they practise?

READING XI.

THE EXODUS OR DEPARTURE FROM EGYPT.

NINE plagues had already fallen upon the Egyptians, reducing them to a dreadful state of misery and suffering; still the king would not do the only thing that would relieve them from these terrible scourges, for he would not believe that they were sent on account of his opposition to God. At length Moses went to him for the tenth and last time, having prepared everything for the immediate departure of the people, for he well knew what was now going to happen would force the king to give the consent he had so long and obstinately withheld. He solemnly warned him of the impending evil, imploring him to avert it by letting the Hebrews go to celebrate their festival, for that was all he had asked; but Pharoah answered in a violent rage, that if Moses presumed to trouble him any more about the affairs of the Hebrews, he would have his head cut off: on which Moses left his presence, and went to make ready

for the flight; for he foresaw what would be the result of the approaching calamity. All the former plagues had been foretold on the day before they took place; but this last and most terrible of all was declared to Pharoah four days before it came to pass, and in the interval Moses went to Goshen, where he made the people pack up all their goods, and then formed them into twelve companies, according to their tribes, like the mustering of an army for a long march. Then, when the appointed day was come, a great feast was held, and sacrifices were made to the Lord, as was customary when any great event was expected. This feast was called the Passover, and it is held by the Jews to this very day, to commemorate the deliverance of their forefathers from their bondage among the Egyptians.

The anger of God was not only kindled against the king of Egypt, but against his people also; and every one was doomed to share in the dreadful punishment about to be inflicted for continued disobedience to the Divine command. On that fatal night the angel of death was sent forth to destroy the eldest child of every Egyptian family, from that of the haughty sovereign to that of the humble peasant; so that in every house arose a sudden cry of anguish, which

must have been terrible indeed, as the Egyptians were very violent in their expressions of grief for the dead, and used to run into the streets uttering loud cries and lamentations, as soon as the last breath had escaped the lips of a departing relative. Great, then, must have been the outcry on this awful occasion, when every parent was called up at midnight to witness the sudden death of a beloved child. Pharaoh himself was softened by this fearful catastrophe, and instantly sent to tell Moses that he and all his people might go and celebrate their religious rites as they desired; and so anxious were the Egyptians now to hasten their departure, that they brought them large presents of gold and silver, of garments, and of all things they would require on a long journey. Being in haste to set forward on their march, the Hebrews would not stay to finish making the bread that was but half prepared, but packed up the dough before the leaven was put to it; and that is the reason why the Jews eat unleavened bread at the feast of the Passover, which is so called because the destroying angel was commanded to visit with death all the houses of the Egyptians, but to pass over those of the Israelites without injury.

Another observance in connection with the

Passover was, that every family should kill a lamb in memory of the slaying of the firstborn by the angel of death, and this lamb was eaten at night, all the persons partaking of it being clothed as if about to make a journey. If there were not enough in family to eat the whole of the paschal lamb, it was the custom to invite others, as no part of it might be left. These ceremonies were observed with great solemnity in ancient times, and are not wholly discontinued at the present day.

As soon as the royal message was delivered, the Hebrews, who had already collected together all their flocks and herds, set forward on their march before daybreak, each tribe headed by its own chief, and displaying its own particular banner or ensign, which, it is supposed, was cast in brass and carried on a pole. Moses and Aaron were the commanders-in-chief, and were accompanied by their sister Miriam, who from that time was looked upon as a queen among the people.

QUESTIONS ON READING XI.

How many plagues had fallen upon the Egyptians before the great catastrophe?

How did Pharaoh receive the final appeal of Moses?

How long a time elapsed between the prophecy and its accomplishment?

How did Moses employ the interval?

What great Jewish festival was then instituted?

What was the tenth plague of Egypt?

What was the result?

Why was the feast made on this occasion called the Passover?

Why do the Jews eat unleavened bread during the Passover?

Describe the order in which the Israelites went out of Egypt?

THE RED SEA.

Page 61.

READING XII.

THE PASSAGE OF THE RED SEA.

"For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and the LORD brought again the waters of the sea upon them; but the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea." *Exodus* xv. 19.

WHEN the Israelites quitted Egypt under the conduct of Moses and Aaron, it is supposed their numbers must have exceeded two millions, as there were 600,000 men above the age of twenty, besides the women, children, and grown-up youth of both sexes. They carried with them their moveable property of every description, and marched, as before stated, in twelve companies, each tribe forming one division, commanded by a chief appointed by the great leader, and each displaying its own standard. In the midst of this host was borne a sarcophagus, or stone coffin, containing the embalmed body of Joseph, which they kept among them until, after a lapse of forty years, they were enabled to bury

him in the land of his fathers, according to his dying request; and at this present day, a small building between two mountains at Shechem, near Hebron, is pointed out to the traveller as the tomb of Israel's favourite son.

As soon as Pharaoh discovered that Moses had no intention of bringing the people back again to Egypt, he was greatly enraged, as he had consented at last to nothing more than that they should go three days' journey into the desert to hold a religious festival; but he had sent spies to keep a watch upon their movements, and soon learned that their object was to make their escape from the country.

He immediately collected the whole of his military forces, consisting of 50,000 horsemen, 200,000 foot soldiers, and 600 war chariots (for chariots were used in Egypt from a very early period, both for war and for pleasure); and with this immense army he set off to pursue the fugitives, and force them to return; thinking it would be an easy matter to overcome them, as they were unarmed, and without horses or chariots. It would have been easy, no doubt, had they not been assisted by a higher Power than any that could be opposed to them by human means; and it was a strange thing the

king should already have forgotten how many proofs he had received that these people were protected by a Sovereign infinitely greater than himself, even He who governs the whole world. The Israelites were encamped on the shore of the Red Sea when they saw the Egyptian army approaching; and as their progress onward was stopped by rugged mountains, they gave themselves up for lost, and began to reproach their leader for bringing them into so perilous a situation. But Moses desired them to fear nothing; and having prayed to God, he stretched out his rod over the sea, when a high wind began to blow, which gradually divided the waves, so as to leave a dry passage through the water. The people were greatly astonished at this miracle, and did not hesitate to follow their chief, who fearlessly entered the pass, while the waves stood piled up like liquid mountains on each side; and thus the whole of the Israelites, with all their baggage, crossed the sea in the course of the night, without the aid of boats. The spot where this miraculous passage was made cannot now be ascertained with any degree of certainty; but it is supposed to have been a little way below the town of Suez, which stands at the head of the Red Sea. On looking at the

map, it will be found that the sea is divided towards the north, into two great arms, one extending 100 miles in a north-easterly direction, the other 180 miles north-west, thus enclosing a vast tract of rocky country, with great deserts, now called the peninsula of Sinai; and it was there the children of Israel dwelt during the forty years that intervened between their flight from Egypt and their settlement in Canaan, which, in the time of Moses, was generally called Palestine. The channel, where the waters divided, was probably about two-thirds of a mile in breadth, and the road thus wonderfully made, must have been very wide, or upwards of two millions of people could not have passed over in one night, nor could the whole of that mighty army by which they were pursued have been engulfed at once by the closing of the waters over them. The presumptuous Pharaoh, seeing that all the Hebrews had reached the opposite shore in safety, gave the word of command to follow them, and led the way himself, driving his chariot boldly through the midst of the sea, followed by his six hundred chariots of war, and his many thousands of horse and foot soldiers, but no sooner had the last of this numerous host entered the pass, than the waves

rushed down on both sides, accompanied by a terrific storm of thunder and lightning, and every Egyptian perished, so that not one was left to convey to Egypt the dismal tidings. On the following day great quantities of weapons, and other relics of the ill-fated army were picked up on the sea-shore, a welcome sight to the great leader of the Israelites, who was especially thankful for this seasonable supply of arms, as he foresaw the probability of being attacked by some of the surrounding nations.

QUESTIONS ON READING XII.

How did the Israelites testify their respect for the memory of Joseph when they departed from Egypt?

When was he buried, and where?

What did Pharaoh do when he found the Israelites had taken flight?

Where were the fugitives overtaken?

By what miracle were they saved?

Where would you look for the place of this passage on the map?

Where did the Israelites pass the forty years of their wanderings?

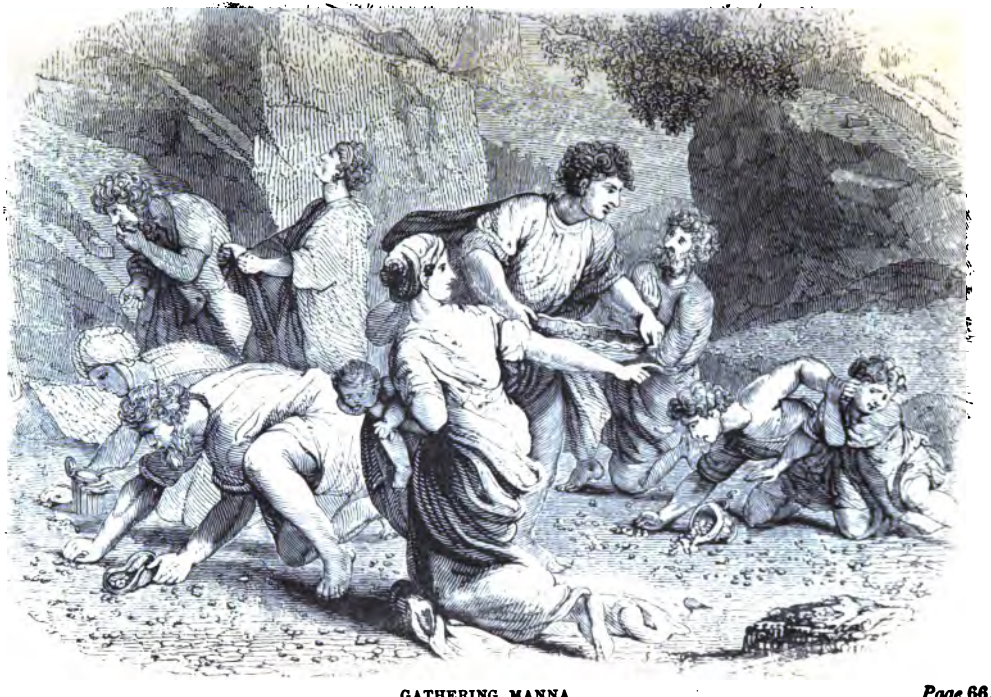
What became of Pharaoh and his host?

What advantages did the Israelites gain by the destruction of the Egyptian army?

READING XIII.

THE MIRACULOUS FOOD.

THE Israelites were greatly rejoiced at their wonderful deliverance, and testified their gratitude by triumphal songs and dances; but their joy was soon turned into murmuring and discontent, for they had now entered a vast desert where there was neither corn nor herbage, so that they were afraid of perishing for want of subsistence; and forgetting the benefits they had received, began to rebel against Moses, saying it would have been better to have remained in Egypt, where, at least, they should have had bread to eat, than to be brought to die of hunger in this dreary wilderness. If Moses had not been gifted with supernatural powers, he would not have been able to rule over a multitude of people who were ready to rise in rebellion whenever they met with any difficulties: but he had no fear of them; for, even in the midst of their fury, when they threatened him with a violent death, he went calmly among them and re-



GATHERING MANNA.

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proved them for their ingratitude, saying they ought to feel assured that the same God who had made a dry passage through the sea could also cause the barren desert to yield food; and that he would do so, if they trusted in His goodness.

These words pacified them, especially as a large flight of birds came across the desert at the time, flying so low that they were easily caught by the hand; and on the same night they began to receive that miraculous supply of food which sustained them during their forty years' abode in the wilderness.

Every morning, except the Sabbath, throughout that long period, the ground around their encampment, as soon as the dew had cleared off, was covered with small particles of a substance somewhat resembling honey, but more solid, and very pleasant to the taste, while it was found sufficiently nutritious to supply the place of bread, and indeed of all other kinds of food. The Israelites called it manna; but it is uncertain whether it was the same thing that is known to us by that name, and esteemed for its medicinal qualities, although our manna is found in the very country where the miracle occurred, being the gum or juice of certain trees that grow in the peninsula of Sinai.

The natural supply, however, of manna from the trees would not have been of much benefit to a people who were destined to pass forty years in a place where the earth produced nothing for their subsistence, since it was only found at particular seasons, and then but in small quantities, as compared with the numbers of people that were to be fed with it. But the manna that was so wonderfully sent from Heaven for the preservation of the children of Israel, came down regularly at night all through the year in the immediate neighbourhood of their encampment, wherever that might happen to be, so that when they changed their station it was no longer found in the place they had left, but began to fall around the spot where they set up their tents anew. Every man was permitted to gather up a sufficient quantity in the morning for the day's use, which he carried to his own tent, when it was ground or pounded in a mortar, and made into cakes by the women, who baked them in heated pans or probably on plates of copper, for they were provided with all such domestic utensils as are requisite for a people leading an unsettled and wandering life. On the sixth day of the week, which was Friday, the miraculous shower was always more abun-

dant, and a double quantity was gathered up, that enough bread might be made to last the Sabbath, without having to work on that day; nor was any manna ever found on the ground on the Sabbath morning, during the many years the Israelites sojourned in the wilderness.

It was about three months after their departure from Egypt when they were attacked, in the neighbourhood of Mount Sinai, by the Amalekites, one of those warlike tribes by whom the mountainous regions of Arabia and Palestine have always been inhabited.

The Israelites on this occasion were placed by Moses under the command of Joshua, a young man of undaunted courage, and much esteemed for his piety and virtue. A great battle was fought, the Amalekites were defeated with considerable loss, and their camp was pillaged by the conquerors, who not only obtained a fresh supply of arms, but also plenty of gold and silver, together with furniture and raiment in abundance; and as each man had a share of the spoils, the tents of the Israelites, after this victory, were furnished with many comforts and even luxuries. They had, besides, taken a number of prisoners, who were obliged

to serve them as slaves; and, in addition to these present benefits, they gained some future advantages, for the news of their success spread so much terror among the surrounding nations, that they were deterred from offering to molest so formidable a people.

Soon after this event Jethro, the father-in law of Moses, came to visit him, accompanied by Zipporah, his wife, and her two sons; and with the assistance of this excellent man, Moses began to establish laws and institutions for the government of the people, a step highly necessary for the preservation of order in so large a community. The supreme power was reserved to himself; but he ordained that there should be judges and magistrates holding different degrees of authority, who were to be elected by the people, and these were to be military as well as civil officers, and to administer justice both in peace and war. Then Moses, at God's command, ascended to the top of Mount Sinai, where he received the Ten Commandments, given by the Lord himself to regulate the conduct of the people towards God and man; therefore we ought carefully to study, and scrupulously to obey, these sacred commands, which are taught to us in the same words that God spake

to the great Ruler of the Israelites on Mount Sinai, saying,

"I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."

QUESTIONS ON READING XIII.

Were the Israelites happy in their newly-acquired liberty?

How did they express their discontent?

What means did Moses take to pacify them?

How were they enabled to subsist in the desert?

How was the manna prepared for eating?

Was there not a remarkable difference in the miraculous supply of food on certain days in the week?

What occasioned the first battle fought by the Israelites?

Who was the commander appointed by Moses?

What did the Israelites gain by their victory over the Amalekites?

Who came to visit Moses after this great victory?

What new regulations did Moses make with the assistance of Jethro?

What was the next great event?

READING XIV.

THE TEMPLE IN THE WILDERNESS.

THE first temple that was dedicated to the service of God was erected at His own command, under the direction of Moses, while the Israelites were encamped at the foot of Mount Sinai. In Egypt there were many splendid temples for the worship of heathen deities, but the Hebrews had no fitting place for worship there during their state of bondage; and in earlier times the mode of performing religious rites was in accordance with the extreme simplicity of the habits and manners of their forefathers. They were, however, a very different people now, in consequence of their long residence in a highly civilized country; and their knowledge of all the useful arts that were cultivated among the Egyptians qualified them for the great work they were now commanded to undertake.

It was the will of the Most High, that His house should be superior to the houses of men; therefore He instructed Moses as to the forma-

tion of the building, which might be termed a Divine work accomplished by human hands. It must be remembered that the Israelites had carried away with them from Egypt vast quantities of treasure of every description. They had abundance of gold and silver, of precious stones, of fine linen, of wool, and of various sorts of dyes for dyeing beautiful colours; therefore, Moses ordered that every man should contribute towards the building of the Temple according to his means, and so anxious were the people to commence the work, that sufficient materials were soon collected. It was to be so constructed that it might be taken to pieces and removed, like the tents, from place to place, so that wherever the people should be stationed, the Temple might be set up, with ease, in the midst of the camp. In fact, it was a magnificent and spacious tented edifice, composed of the richest materials, and more substantially made than the common tents, which were simply formed of poles with strong coverings of goats' hair, spun and woven by the women (for spinning and weaving were their principal occupations). The Temple was formed of brazen pillars with silver capitals or heads, fixed into the ground with long pointed ends, and these

pillars enclosed a large space called the Court, and around the outside was a covering of linen, supposed to have been network, that the people might see through it what was passing in the court, where there was an altar for sacrifices. The entrance was closed by a curtain beautifully embroidered in various colours, chiefly blue, purple, and scarlet, and hung upon pillars of silver. Within this court stood the sacred edifice called the Tabernacle, a superb tent formed of boards, overlaid with gold on both sides, so as to appear like a golden wall, and covered with hangings of fine linen embroidered with flowers, over which were thrown other coverings to protect it from the weather. Superb curtains, hung on pillars of gold, formed the doorway of the Tabernacle, into which none were admitted but the priests, and even they were not allowed to enter a part that was separated from the rest by another rich curtain or veil, and was the most holy place, as being especially dedicated to God, and containing the sacred ark, a golden chest, in which the tables of the ten commandments were deposited.

In the outer room was an altar, on which incense was offered daily, and before the altar stood a massive golden candlestick with seven

branches, bearing seven lamps, and richly ornamented with various devices. In the building and ornamenting of this magnificent temple, artisans of all kinds must have been busily employed, such as smiths, carpenters, dyers, gold-beaters, carvers and gilders, with many others skilled in handicraft; while the female part of the community would be no less industriously engaged in weaving and embroidering the draperies, and making garments for the priests. Aaron was appointed High Priest; and that dignity continued hereditary in his family until the downfall of the Jewish nation. Moses also ordained that the tribe of Levi, to which he himself belonged, should be for ever regarded as a holy tribe, from which all the priests were to be chosen, and the rest were to be employed in religious offices, and to have the care of the Temple and all its sacred furniture. These were the Levites, so often mentioned in the New Testament; and when the Land of Canaan was at last conquered and divided among the twelve tribes of Israel, the Levites had no portion assigned to them, because it was necessary that they should be distributed through the whole nation, that there might be priests and Levites in all the cities; but as Levi was one of the

twelve sons of Jacob, the separation of this tribe made a deficiency in the number; therefore, instead of reckoning Joseph as the head of one of the tribes, his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, were counted as heads, so that Joseph's tribe was divided into two clans, and thus the number of twelve was preserved without the Levites. When the Temple was finished, and all its ordinances established, Moses held frequent communion with God within the sacred enclosure, or most holy place, and there, with the Divine assistance, he composed a code of laws for the government of the people, which continue to be the laws of the Jews to this very day.

QUESTIONS ON READING XIV.

Where was the first temple for the worship of God erected?

What means did the Israelites possess of building a magnificent temple in the desert?

How was the building constructed?

What part did the women take in the work?

Who was appointed High Priest?

To which of the twelve tribes did Moses and Aaron belong?

What did Moses ordain respecting his own particular tribe?

What were the Levites?

Why was the tribe of Levi to have no portion of the promised land?

How was the number of the twelve tribes preserved when that of Levi was separated from them?

READING XV.

THE FORTY YEARS' WANDERINGS AND DEATH OF MOSES.

It was in the second year after the departure of the Israelites from Egypt that the Temple of Moses was erected in the wilderness; and that great leader would have led the people on at once to fight with the Canaanites for possession of the promised land, as that was the grand object for which they had been liberated from slavery; but they again rebelled against him, and were guilty of many acts of disobedience towards God, which brought upon them a severe punishment; for instead of being permitted to conquer and possess immediately the rich and fruitful land which, according to the promise of the Lord, was eventually to become the country of Abraham's posterity, it was decreed that they should remain forty years in the wild and barren deserts, without any settled place of abode. This sentence was announced to them by Moses, and caused bitter grief and repentance; but it had been spoken by Him whose word is truth,

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and it was useless to murmur or to expect that it would be revoked; and thus, in consequence of their own misconduct, the Israelites dwelt in the wilderness for the long period of forty years, removing from station to station, like the wandering Arabs of the present day, and feeding on the manna that continued to fall from Heaven for their support.

When the forty years had nearly expired, Aaron, the High Priest, died, and his memory is still held in such veneration by the Arabs, that they frequently make offerings at a tomb which they believe to be his, as it stands on the summit of a mountain supposed to be that on which his death took place.

After this event Moses commenced the wars that finally led to the conquest of Canaan, which it will be better, perhaps, to call Palestine, that being the name most familiar to us.

The country was at this time wealthy and populous, and divided into several nations, each governed by its own king. There were large handsome cities in every part, many of them surrounded with strong walls, and the people were brave and warlike, so that it would have been a very bold undertaking on the part of the

Hebrew commander to go to war with them, if he had been a man who was only conversant with human affairs; but Moses knew it was God's will that the Israelites should prevail, and the Canaanites be cut off and driven out of the land, therefore he led his army on with confidence, and gained two great battles, one fought with Sihon, king of the Amorites, and another with Og, king of Bashan, both of whom were killed, and their armies utterly destroyed. These victories made the Israelites masters of two rich and fertile districts, with numerous cities in which they found abundance of treasures, for the inhabitants of this part of the country were noted for their wealth, and as they were all driven out or slain, the conquerors enriched themselves with the spoils.

Moses was now very old, and as he felt his end was approaching, he appointed Joshua to be the future commander of the people: and having exhorted them to be obedient to the word of God, and to conform to the laws which had been made for them, he ascended to the top of a mountain situated a few miles to the south of Jericho, attended by Joshua and Eleazar the High Priest, who was the son of his brother Aaron, and there he died.

"And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died; his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.

"And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face."—*Deuteronomy* xxxiv. v. 7—10.

QUESTIONS ON READING XV.

How were the Israelites punished for their frequent acts of rebellion?

When did the death of Aaron take place?

When did Moses commence war with the Canaanites?

What was the state of the country at that time?

What great battles were won by Moses?

What did the Israelites gain by these conquests?

Whom did Moses appoint for his successor?

Where did Moses die?

What was his age at the time of his death?

READING XVI.

CONQUEST OF THE PROMISED LAND.

AFTER the death of Moses, the wars were carried on so successfully by Joshua, that in the course of five years the greater part of Palestine was conquered, and divided among the twelve tribes of Israel, the people of each tribe having their own particular portion of the land, and their own cities, just as if they had been so many separate nations. They gave up dwelling in tents, and established themselves in the towns they had taken from the Canaanites, where the poorer sort began to practise their different trades, while the rich lived in ease and luxury. The tabernacle was set up at Shiloh, about twenty-seven miles from Jerusalem, where it remained for upwards of three hundred years, and that city was in consequence esteemed a holy place, and was the general residence of the prophets. In all their wanderings the Hebrews had carried with them the embalmed body of Joseph, who had been dead nearly two hundred years, in

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order to fulfil his last request that he might be buried in the land of his fathers; and after the conquest of Palestine he was interred at Shechem, near Hebron, in a spot of ground that had been purchased by his father Jacob.

After the death of their great commander, Joshua, the Israelites soon discontinued the war, and permitted those nations of the Canaanites who had not been yet conquered, to remain in peace on condition of paying tribute. Husbandry was the favourite pursuit of the wealthy, most of whom had large estates, comprising cornfields, vineyards, and olive grounds, in which they took great delight; but in consequence of the riches they had acquired during the wars, they became indolent, and careless of the rules which Moses, their great and inspired lawgiver, had laid down for their conduct. There were, no doubt, many good men amongst them; but the greater number neglected to obey the laws, and to serve God as they had been commanded to do, and these were the causes that led to all their future misfortunes. They were apt to be guilty of idolatry, and to worship the false gods of the nations around them; but the Lord never failed to punish them for their wickedness by suffering their enemies to overcome and bring

them under subjection; yet, whenever they repented of their sins and returned to their duty, they were sure to be delivered from the trouble that had fallen upon them, and were again prosperous and happy.

The government was under the direction of a chief magistrate called the Judge of Israel, who was always the commander of the armies, and administered justice in such causes as could not be decided by the inferior judges, of whom there were seven principal ones in each city. This was the form of government prescribed by Moses, and it lasted five hundred years, when the people being discontented with certain rulers that were set over them, desired to have a king, for as all the surrounding nations were governed by kings, they thought it would be well for them also.

Now the reason of their dissatisfaction was this. The prophet Samuel who had succeeded Eli the high priest as judge of Israel, having grown old, gave up the cares of government to his two sons, who, instead of acting uprightly as he had always done, were so unjust and oppressive, that the elders of the people met together, and went in a body to Samuel to complain of the conduct of the new judges, and to beg of

him to appoint a king to rule over them, and conduct their wars. Samuel was much distressed, both because of the wickedness of his sons, and the great objection he had to alter the form of government; therefore he endeavoured to persuade the people to be contented with the constitution that had been so long established: but they persisted in their demand, and he then prayed that God would instruct him what to do, for he knew not whom to appoint, as there was no royal family, the Hebrews never having had a king. Then God declared to him that on a certain day at a particular hour, it should be so ordered that one should come to his house from a city at some distance, belonging to the tribe of Benjamin, a young man of noble family, distinguished by his uncommon height and majestic appearance, and this was the man who was to be appointed king.

The prophet therefore made a solemn sacrifice on that day, and invited a number of men of the first importance to sup with him in honour of the arrival of the future monarch; for it was customary among the Jews to give an entertainment after a sacrifice, as he who made the offering was entitled to the greater portion of the flesh of the animal sacrificed, which served for the feast.

It was seldom, except on extraordinary occasions, that animal food was eaten by the Jews, whose chief diet consisted of bread, rice, honey, milk, fruit, and vegetables; for in the warm countries of the East such cool and simple aliments are the most conducive to health. Supper was their principal meal, and was taken about five o'clock in the afternoon, so that people did not invite their friends to dine, but to sup with them.

The young man came at the time appointed, and to all except one his visit appeared to be accidental, even he himself not dreaming it was otherwise, as he came there to consult the prophet respecting some cattle that had been lost from his father's meadows; but Samuel knew that Providence had directed his steps, so he bade him welcome, and invited him to supper, giving him the highest place at table, and ordering that the choicest viands should be set before him. The stranger, whose name was Saul, was surprised at meeting with such a reception, until Samuel took him after supper to the top of the house to converse in private, and then no doubt he communicated to him that it was the will of the Almighty he should be chosen king of Israel. It was nothing unusual

for people to walk, or even to eat and sleep on their house tops; for the roofs were flat and covered with earth rolled hard to keep out the rain, so that grass, weeds, and flowers sometimes grew there, consequently the top of the house was a kind of garden, and after the heat of the day it was a cool and pleasant retreat.

Soon after this Saul was elected king, and proclaimed in an assembly of the people, about eleven hundred years before the birth of Our Saviour; but Samuel still continued in authority as judge and chief minister, so that he was in fact the ruler of the state, while Saul was the military commander.

He had reigned twenty years, when he was killed in battle, together with his three sons, and the sovereignty was then conferred on David, the chosen servant of the Lord, and the best and greatest of all the kings of Israel. David was the son of Jesse, an inhabitant of the city of Bethlehem, and Jesse was the grandson of Ruth, the dutiful and affectionate daughter-in-law of the widow Naomi, whose story is so beautifully told in the Bible, where it follows the Book of Judges.

QUESTIONS ON READING XVI.

Who completed the conquest of the Promised Land?

How was the land apportioned?

Where was the Tabernacle set up?

How was the last request of Joseph fulfilled?

What was the mode of life pursued by the wealthy?

How did they bring misfortunes upon themselves?

What was the form of government prescribed by Moses?

How long were the Israelites ruled by judges?

Why did the people wish to have a king?

Who was the first king of the Israelites?

How came Saul to be elected king?

What position was held by Samuel after Saul was made king?

How long did Saul reign?

By whom was he succeeded?

RUTH AND NAOMI. *Page* 8

READING XVII.

STORY OF RUTH.

It was some time before Samuel was appointed Judge of Israel that a terrible famine, occasioned probably by the wars in which the Israelites were constantly engaged, caused a great many people to leave the country. Among these was a citizen of Bethlehem, named Elimelech, of the tribe of Judah, a man of good estate, who had lived in luxury until this calamity occurred, when he found himself obliged to give up his house and lands, and seek refuge, with his wife and his two sons, in the land of Moab, a country to the east of Palestine, beyond the Dead Sea. There they lived very happily for a few years when the father died, which was a great sorrow to them all, for he had been a good husband and a kind parent. After awhile, however, the young men, whose names were Mahlon and Chilion, married two sisters, Moabites, one named Ruth and the other Orpah. They were amiable young women and lived very happily

with Naomi, their mother-in-law, who loved them as well as if they had been her own daughters; and so the time went on until ten years had passed away since the family of Elimelech quitted the city of Bethlehem to dwell among strangers in a foreign country. At the end of that period another sad affliction befel Naomi in the loss of her two sons, who both died about the same time. She was now quite destitute, for she had no property in the strange land, nor any means of subsistence, therefore she resolved to return to her birthplace, where she had relations, who perhaps would help her in her need. Her daughters-in-law did everything in their power to comfort her, and endeavoured to persuade her to stay with them, but her heart naturally turned towards her own native home, and when they found she was bent upon going, they declared they would go with her and share her destiny whatever it might be. To this however she objected, saying they would be much better off among their own kindred than in a strange place where her own lot was uncertain, and where, if she died, they would not have a single friend to care for them. Orpah listened to this advice and consented to remain behind, but Ruth would not be persuaded to

part from her beloved mother-in-law, for she could not bear the thought of letting her take such a journey alone; therefore she answered, "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God." So Ruth went with Naomi, and they reached Bethlehem in safety. It was harvest time when they came there; and as they were very poor, Ruth proposed to go with other poor people to pick up the scattered corn left by the reapers on the ground, and her mother directed her to go into the fields of a wealthy landowner called Boaz, who was a relation of her late husband. Now Ruth was very beautiful, and still quite young, besides which there was an air of grace and modesty about her that attracted the notice of the master of the field who happened to be walking about there, looking on at his workpeople, and enjoying the sight of his abundant crops. So he called his steward and bade him inquire who she was and whence she came; and when he heard she was the young widow of his near kinsman, Mahlon, he expressed an earnest desire to befriend both her and her mother-in-law. Then he found what a good

daughter she had been, and how she had sacrificed her own interests for the sake of affording comfort to Naomi in her poverty and affliction. Charmed with her dutiful conduct, her piety, and the graceful simplicity of her manners, he made her his wife, and they had a son named Obed, whose grandson, David, came to be King of Israel.

QUESTIONS ON READING XVII.

Who was Elimelech?
Why did he leave Bethlehem?
Where did he settle?
Of whom did his family consist?
Who was Ruth?
How did Ruth show her goodness and piety?
What happened soon after her arrival at Bethlehem?
Which of the kings of Israel was descended from Ruth and Boaz?

READING XVIII.

KING DAVID.

When Ruth came with her mother-in-law to the city of Bethlehem, a poor and friendless stranger, how little could she have imagined that her own great-grandson was destined to be the high and mighty sovereign of the country, and that his name would be revered by the people of after ages, even to the end of the world. King David was not born a prince any more than Saul, but he was appointed to succeed that monarch by the prophet Samuel, who acted in this case as he had done before, by the Divine command; for God was displeased with Saul for many instances of disobedience, and, as a punishment, ordained that the crown should not be inherited by any of his sons, but should pass into another family. Jesse, the father of David, and grandson of Ruth, was then an old man, and the father of a large family. David, his youngest son, was about fifteen years of age when Samuel was commanded to select him as the successor to

the throne; but the ceremonial that, by Divine grace, insured his succession, was to be performed secretly, as it was ordained that Saul should remain king until his death; so that even David himself did not know the high destiny in store for him, as he was not aware that the oil which the prophet poured upon his head was consecrated, and that the act of anointing him with it, was a sign that it was the will of God he should reign over Israel. No one knew this but Samuel himself; and many years had yet to elapse before the event would come to pass, as David was but a mere youth when he was thus chosen. His occupation at that time was to tend his father's flocks, which has caused him to be sometimes called the Shepherd King; but after Samuel had anointed him secretly with the holy oil, he was introduced to the court of Saul, on account of his skill in singing and playing on the harp, as the monarch had become subject to fits of insanity, which nothing but music had power to soothe or dispel. David was not only a poet and musician, but, although so young, had all the qualities of a courageous warrior; therefore the king appointed him to be his armour-bearer, a post of no small danger as well as importance, for the Israelites were at

this time constantly at war with the surrounding nations, especially with the Philistines, a powerful and warlike people, who had made some important conquests in Israel, and established garrisons in several of the cities. Their own territory was a tract of country to the southwest of Palestine bordering on the states of the Israelites, and divided into five principalities, the rulers of which were called Lords of the Philistines. In these wars David, who was then not much more than twenty years of age, distinguished himself by slaying in single combat a giant of prodigious strength, named Goliath, the renowned champion of the Philistines; a feat which insured victory to the Israelites, and excited the wonder and admiration of all the people, who, after a battle was won, celebrated their triumph over their formidable foes with dances and songs, in which the praises of David were mingled with thanks to Heaven for this great success. The honours paid to the youth awakened the jealousy of the king, who devised many schemes for his destruction, but the Almighty rendered these abortive, chiefly through the intervention of Jonathan, one of the king's sons, between whom and David there existed a mutual friendship. David was married to one

of Saul's daughters; but even this relationship did not prevent the king from hating and persecuting him with intent to deprive him of his life. By the aid of Jonathan, however, David escaped from many snares that were spread for him; but at length he was compelled to fly to the deserts for safety, and there he was joined from time to time by those who were dissatisfied with the existing government, until at last he found himself at the head of an army of four hundred men. It was during his exile in the deserts that he composed some of the Psalms wherein he complains of the unjust persecution from which he is suffering. At length Saul was killed in battle, having reigned twenty years; and Jonathan, with two of his brothers, fell on the same day, on which David was elected king by the people. During the early part of his reign, his capital was Hebron; but, about seven years after his elevation to the throne, he besieged and took the city of Jerusalem, which had been held by the Canaanites, and removed the seat of government thither. He built a royal palace, and greatly enlarged and beautified the city, which he fortified with strong walls; and thus it became the great capital of the Jewish dominions, and continued to be so

until the kingdom of the Jews was destroyed by the Romans.

QUESTIONS ON READING XVIII.

Who was David?

Why was it decreed that the crown should pass from the heirs of Saul?

How was the appointment of David confirmed?

What was the age of David when anointed by Samuel as future King of Israel?

What was his occupation?

How did he gain an introduction to Saul?

What mark of distinction was conferred upon him by the king?

What nation was at war with the Israelites in the time of Saul?

How did David first gain renown as a warrior?

Why did Saul become his enemy?

Whom did David marry?

Who was Jonathan, and how did he prove his friendship for David?

How did David shield himself from the persecution of Saul?

How were the troubles of David ended?

When did Jerusalem become the capital of the Jewish dominions?

How did David improve that city?

READING XIX.

KING SOLOMON.

DAVID did not reign very peaceably at first, for Saul had left one son living, a young man named Ishbosheth, who was proclaimed king by his uncle Abner, who raised a large army to support his cause, and carried on a war for seven years against David, who was assisted by his own tribe of Judah, and by many persons of influence, so that, in the end he was universally acknowledged as sovereign. It was then he removed the seat of government from Hebron to Jerusalem, and as soon as he was established there he caused the Ark of the Lord to be brought from the Tabernacle at Shiloh, having prepared a splendid tent for its reception. It was carried in grand procession with music, songs, and dances; the king himself, divested of his royal robes, playing on his harp, and joining in the devotional dances which formed a part of the religious ceremonies of those times. A grand festival was held on this occasion, and

a vast number of sacrifices were made; after which the people were feasted with bread, meat, and wine, every one, women as well as men, receiving a certain portion of those good things.

Music was an essential part of the Hebrew worship, which was performed with great magnificence. David instituted a band of four thousand musicians and singers, divided into twenty-four classes, which performed the service alternately, week by week, the grandest choir perhaps that ever was known in the world. The performers were arrayed in white linen vestments, and their voices were accompanied by harps and cymbals. The full band consisted likewise of horns, trumpets, tambourines or timbrels, and several kinds of stringed instruments.

But a tabernacle, although a very appropriate structure for the desert, where all the houses were tents, was somewhat out of character in a large city; besides which, the pious David thought it was sinful in him to live in a handsome palace, while there was no better house dedicated to the service of God than a tent. He therefore formed the design of building a magnificent temple for the worship of God and the location of the Ark, and he collected vast

quantities of materials for that purpose; but he was not permitted to execute this great work, which, after his death, was performed by his son and successor, King Solomon.

The reign of David was long and prosperous, but was far from peaceful; therefore we find the Psalms frequently interspersed with supplications to the Lord to defend him against his enemies, or with thanksgivings for victories obtained over them. He was successful in his wars, and brought under subjection most of the nations of Syria, obliging them to pay a heavy tribute, so that his wealth was constantly increasing; and thus his son, although a very young man when he ascended the throne, was the richest sovereign in the world.

Solomon was, indeed, the greatest and most magnificent of the princes of his time, so that many others were glad to court his friendship and alliance. He was also endowed with an extraordinary share of wisdom, which enabled him to govern his own country well, and caused him to be respected by other nations. He kept his court with great splendour, his table being supplied by the governors of the different provinces he held in subjection, who collected the tribute partly in kind from the people, that is,

in produce instead of money, and sent for the king's use every day a certain quantity of flour and meal, with oxen, lambs, or sheep, game, fish, and various kinds of birds, so that the royal household was well supplied at free cost. His horses, too, were fed by tribute; and as they were not less than forty thousand in number, their daily amount of provender was considerable.

The reign of Solomon was spent in peace, which was a happy thing for the people, who had leisure to attend to the cultivation of their lands, and were able to live in greater luxury than they had ever done before; for there had never been so long an interval of peace since Joshua first led their forefathers into the country.

Solomon reigned nearly eighty years with great glory, and died at a very advanced age, leaving the kingdom to his son Rehoboam, for whose benefit and instruction he wrote the excellent book of Proverbs, which contains such good advice and so many wise maxims.

QUESTIONS ON READING XIX.

How was the early part of David's reign disturbed?
What was his first act on removing to Jerusalem?

How was the performance of Divine Service conducted?

What musical instruments were in use among the Jews?

What great work was designed by David?

By whom was it completed?

How was the wealth of David increased?

Who succeeded him?

What was the character of Solomon?

How was the royal household supplied with provisions?

How many horses had King Solomon in his stables?

What was the condition of the people during his reign?

How long did he reign?

STREET IN JERUSALEM. *Page* 103.

READING XX.

THE TEMPLE OF SOLOMON.

THE ancient city of Jerusalem stood upon two hills, the one called Mount Sion, the other Mount Acra; the former containing the royal palace, with the residences of the chief priests and other great men, while the bulk of the population inhabited the latter, or lower city. These two parts were connected by a bridge that crossed the deep valley between them; but there was a third hill close to Acra, and afterwards joined to it by filling up the hollow, and it was on this eminence, then known by the name of Mount Moriah, that the Temple of Solomon was erected. It was not a very large building, not so large as in the time of our Saviour, when it had been rebuilt by Herod the Great; but, as far as we can judge from description, it must have been the most splendid edifice that was ever raised by human hands and perhaps the most costly; for the royal builder did not spare his wealth in the service of the Lord,

and he deemed it fitting that the house of God should surpass in grandeur the palace of any earthly sovereign. He sent to Hiram the rich and powerful king of Tyre, requesting that monarch to furnish him with a quantity of cedar wood from the mountains of Lebanon, which traversed his dominions, and in ancient times were covered with forests of stately cedars and cypress trees, of which but few traces are remaining, the sides of the mountains being now in many parts cut into terraces for the cultivation of mulberry trees, vines, and olives.

Hiram agreed to send Solomon as much timber as he required, for which he was to receive corn, wine, and oil, in exchange; and when the trees were cut down they were made into rafts, and floated down the Mediterranean Sea to the port of Joppa, the point nearest Jerusalem, whence they were conveyed to the city on sledges or waggons.

The foundations and walls of the Temple were of white stone, of which Solomon had plenty in his own dominions among the mountains, where thousands of men were busily employed in cutting it into large square blocks; those for the outer walls being highly polished, and so neatly fitted together as to have the ap-

pearance of an unbroken surface of pure white marble. The roof and inner walls were of cedar, elaborately carved and gilded; and even the floor was covered with plates of gold: so that the inside was one dazzling mass of the precious metal, relieved by the beautiful curtains of purple and other brilliant hues, superbly embroidered, that hung before the entrances, and enclosed also the holy place that was destined for the reception of the Ark.

The principal artist employed in the construction of this beautiful building came from Tyre, for the Tyrians were a very refined and highly civilised people; but most of the workmen were King Solomon's own subjects, whose labour was exacted as a tax: and as the Temple was a public benefit, it was but right perhaps that the people should contribute their industry towards a work in which all had an interest. However, that it might not fall too hard on any, it was arranged that 10,000 men should work for one month, at the end of which they should return to their homes, and be replaced by a fresh set: who, in their turns would be relieved by others when their term of labour was expired, and so on. The Temple was finished in seven years, when a grand festival was held at Jerusalem to

celebrate its opening, and the removal of the Ark into it from the upper city, where it had been brought in the time of David. The Ark, which contained only the two tables of stone on which the commandments were written, was carried to the new Temple in grand procession, with music, dances, and sacred songs: the king walking before it, burning incense, and offering sacrifices all the way.

The golden altar and candlestick, made by Moses, were also placed in the Temple; and so great was the number of sheep and oxen sacrificed on this joyful occasion, that the people were feasted for a whole fortnight on the flesh of the victims, such being the custom at all the great public festivals of the Jews.

The greatest of these festivals was the Feast of Tabernacles, celebrated at the conclusion of the harvest, in thanksgiving for the fruits of the earth; but chiefly to commemorate the forty years that the Israelites dwelt in tents in the wilderness.

During this festival, the people quitted their houses and lived in booths formed of the branches of trees, which were set up in the streets and open places of the city, and also on the roofs of the houses.

All persons who entered the Temple carried in one hand a branch of palm, and in the other a branch of citron; and at night the Court of the Temple was illuminated, and a torch-dance performed there, accompanied by music and songs. In short, it was a season of general rejoicing, and lasted eight days, beginning and ending on the Sabbath.

QUESTIONS ON READING XX.

Describe the situation of Jerusalem?
Where was Solomon's Temple erected?
Who was Hiram, and how did he assist in Solomon's great work?
What did Hiram take in exchange for his wood?
How was the wood conveyed to Jerusalem?
What were the walls of the Temple made of?
Describe the interior?
How was the labour regulated?
How long did it take to build the Temple?
How was the opening of the Temple celebrated?
Which was the greatest of the Jewish festivals?
How was it celebrated?
How long did it last?

READING XXI.

THE KINGDOM DIVIDED.

DAVID and Solomon had reigned over all the twelve tribes of Israel, and their dominion likewise extended over several nations that had been conquered and brought under subjection by King David in his numerous wars; therefore they were very powerful sovereigns, their kingdom was very large, and their grandeur was supported by the abundance of wealth that came to them from all parts of their dominions in the shape of tribute and taxes. After the death of Solomon, however, a great revolution took place, by which the splendour of the kingdom was much diminished; and this was owing to the misconduct of his son and successor Rehoboam, who made himself so unpopular by his haughty manners and tyrannical disposition, that a great portion of the people revolted, and set up a king of their own choosing, a man of rank and importance, named Jeroboam, whose exaltation to the throne had been foretold to him by one of

the prophets; and that prediction very likely encouraged him to head the rebellion. He was elected king at the city of Shechem, near Hebron, which he made his capital; while Rehoboam hastened to Jerusalem, where he was protected and acknowledged as king by the people of two tribes, those of Judah and Benjamin, which alone remained faithful to him out of all the twelve tribes, the rest adhering to the new monarch they had chosen. Thus the kingdom of David came to be divided into two distinct sovereignties; that of the ten tribes called the kingdom of Israel, the other the kingdom of Judah; whence the people, though not till long afterwards, took the name of Jews,—a name which in time extended itself to the whole nation of the Israelites, and by which they are distinguished to this day. The kings of Israel and Judah were often at war with each other, and both were constantly harassed by the incursions of the kings of Syria, a large country to the north and east of Palestine, which had been conquered and held in subjection by King David, but had recovered its freedom in the time of Solomon, after which the Syrians were very troublesome enemies, until there arose a still more powerful people than either Syrians or

Hebrews, who overcame both, and put an end to the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, the former being destroyed about 106 years after the insurrection that deprived the son of Solomon of so large a portion of his inheritance, and the latter 134 years afterwards. The calamities that befell the people of Israel were entirely owing to their own wickedness in forsaking God to worship idols, in defiance of the first commandment, which says, "Thou shalt have none other Gods but me." In vain did the prophets warn them of the consequences of their disobedience; for there were many of those heaven-inspired men living among them at that period, who possessed not only the gift of prophecy, but also that of performing miracles, which was given them in order to distinguish the true prophets of the Lord from such as were merely pretenders. Still the commandments of God and the laws of Moses were continually broken, till at length the Almighty in his anger forsook the ungrateful people who had forsaken him, and suffered them to fall into the hands of their enemies.

Farther northward than Syria, there was a kingdom supposed to have been founded by Nimrod very soon after the deluge, and its capital was the famous city of Nineveh, the ruins of

which have been so lately discovered. There, too, stood the mighty city of Babylon, originally built around the tower of Babel, and, in the time of the kings of Israel, one of the greatest and most magnificent cities in the world. This kingdom was enlarged by conquest till it became exceedingly powerful under the name of the Assyrian Empire; and, at length, one of its monarchs, a warlike king named Shalmaneser, led his army into the country of the Israelites, where he besieged and took the city of Samaria, which was then the capital of the kingdom of Israel, or of the ten tribes, who were completely conquered, their government ended, and the whole of the people compelled to leave the country, and settle in Media, while the land was repeopled by foreign colonies established in various parts of it by the conqueror; and it was the descendants of these new settlers who are so frequently alluded to in the New Testament by the name of Samaritans.

QUESTIONS ON READING XXI.

What extent of dominion was possessed by David and Solomon?

How was their grandeur supported?

Who succeeded King Solomon?

What was the character of Rehoboam?

What were the consequences of his tyranny?

Where did the election of Jereboam take place?

Which of the twelve tribes remained faithful to Solomon's son?

How were the two kingdoms named?

By whom were both kingdoms often invaded?

When was the kingdom of Israel destroyed?

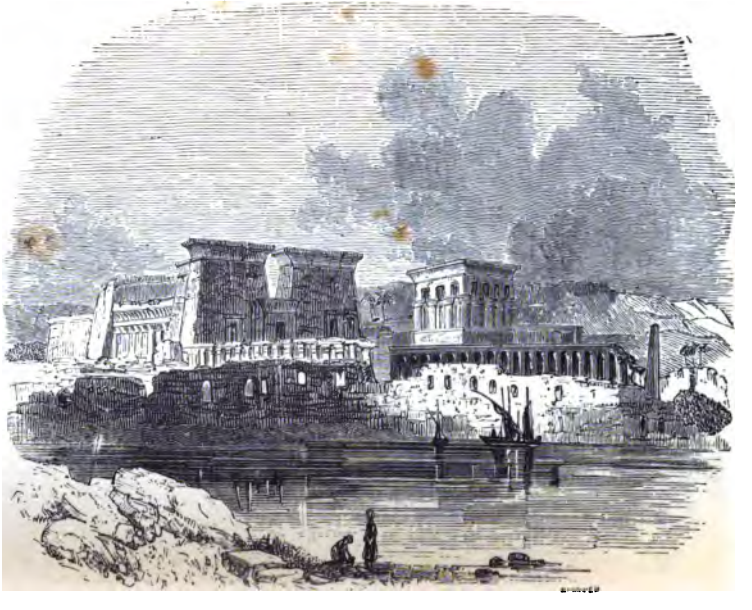
What occasioned the calamities that fell upon the people of Israel?

Who was Shalmaneser?

What great cities did the Assyrian empire contain?

What city was besieged and taken hy Shalmaneser?

What became of the ten tribes of Israel?



BABYLON.

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READING XXII.

THE BABYLONISH CAPTIVITY.

THE kingdom of Judah continued to exist for upwards of 130 years after that of Israel had been overthrown by Shalmaneser; but its people also frequently disobeyed the word of God, till at length they brought upon themselves a like punishment to that which had befallen the ten rebellious tribes.

"And the Lord said, I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel; and will cast off this city Jerusalem, which I have chosen, and the house of which I have said, My name shall be there."—2 *Kings* xxiii. 27.

Accordingly Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, who had already compelled the king of Judah to pay him tribute, and had carried away to Babylon a number of boys of high rank as hostages, made another expedition against

Jerusalem in the reign of Zedekiah, in consequence of a revolt, and laid siege to the city, which was bravely defended for nearly eighteen months, when the people, being reduced to the utmost distress by famine, were obliged to surrender. Jerusalem was thus taken by the Chaldees, or Babylonians, as they are more generally called, and the beautiful Temple of Solomon, that house of which God had said, "My name shall be there," was plundered by the soldiers of Babylon, and all its sacred treasures were carried off to that great capital; after which the Temple was set on fire and destroyed, together with the whole city, which had also been given up to plunder.

The king had fled with his wives and children, but he was overtaken near Jericho, and his eyes were put out by command of the conqueror, who then sent him and all his family as prisoners to Babylon; and thus ended the kings of the line of David, of whom nineteen had reigned in succession since Solomon.

The father of Nebuchadnezzar, in conjunction with a prince who is called in the book of Daniel Darius the Median, had destroyed the great and opulent city of Nineveh, and divided its territories between them; thus putting an end to the

Assyrian Empire, about six hundred years before the Christian era, and founding the two new empires of Babylon and Media, just twenty years before Jerusalem was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar.

We are told in the Bible by the prophet Jonah, that "Nineveh was an exceeding great city, of three days' journey." It is indeed supposed to have been nearly fifty miles in circumference, and was surrounded by lofty walls and towers, and probably at that time unequalled in size and splendour. But the Ninevites being rich and luxurious, became proud and sinful, therefore God sent the prophet Jonah to warn them that if they continued in their evil ways, the city would certainly be destroyed; and it was on his way thither that he was thrown into the sea, and swallowed by a whale or some other great fish, inside of which he remained unhurt for three days and three nights, and then pursued his journey and performed his mission. The people repented for a time of their evil doings; but when their fears were abated they returned to the same course, and then the judgment of the Lord came upon them.

Nineveh was never rebuilt; and for many ages its proud towers, its sumptuous palaces, lay

buried in the dust, and it was so completely forgotten that even its site became a matter of uncertainty. But it is now found; some of its ruins are uncovered, and the ancient palace of the Assyrian monarchs has been entered and found to correspond exactly with all that is said respecting it in the Scriptures, and some of its remains are now deposited in the British Museum. And now let us return to the affairs of the Jews.

Nebuchadnezzar carried away all the principal people from Jerusalem and its territories, as captives to Babylon, but he left the common people to cultivate the land, and appointed governors over them to keep them in subjection, and make them pay the tribute which he imposed upon them. The captives, however, were not treated as bondsmen, but as exiles, and were permitted to follow such occupations as might enable them to acquire property; so that many of them in time became wealthy men, and married women of that country.

QUESTIONS ON READING XXII.

How long did the kingdom of Judah subsist after that of Israel was destroyed?

By whom was Jerusalem besieged and taken?

What was the fate of the city?

Who was King of Judah at the time?

What became of Zedekiah and his family?

When was the famous city of Nineveh destroyed?

What new empires were founded about that time?

Which of the prophets foretold the downfall of Nineveh?

What happened to Jonah on his way to the city?

What became of the people of Jerusalem after Nebuchadnezzar's conquest?

How were the captives treated at Babylon?

READING XXIII.

THE FALL OF BABYLON.

AMONG the illustrious persons who had been brought to Babylon, hostages for the fealty of the King of Judah, some time before the fall of Jerusalem, was a youth of the royal family named Daniel, who was carefully educated at the court, and afterwards became a great prophet, and was exalted to the highest dignities of the state.

The character of Daniel bears a striking resemblance to that of Joseph, and some parts of his history also are very similar; as for instance, he was at first considered in the light of a slave, but gained the favour and confidence of the king by giving the interpretation of a dream, which none of the wise men were able to solve.

Nebuchadnezzar made him the chief ruler over the kingdom on account of his wisdom and goodness, and as long as that monarch lived he enjoyed high rank and power; but he did not retain his office after the death of his royal patron, nor is he spoken of again in the Bible

until the reign of Belshazzar, the fourth king in descent from Nebuchadnezzar. Belshazzar was noted for his impiety. He delighted in speaking irreverently of the Almighty, and on one occasion, being at supper with a number of friends in his banqueting hall, he so far forgot the respect due to holy things, that he sent for the gold and silver cups that had been brought from the Temple of Jerusalem to use at his feast. But this desecration of the sacred vessels did not go unpunished; for while he was yet drinking and making merry, a hand appeared on the wall, writing certain words in characters of fire. These words were in a strange language, and no one present could understand them, so Daniel, who was then an old man, was sent for to interpret them; and he told the now terrified king that in consequence of his wickedness the Lord had resolved to destroy his kingdom, and that the end of his reign was near at hand, for that was the meaning of the words he saw written by the mysterious hand.

For upwards of two years Babylon had been besieged by Cyrus, nephew of Darius, the King of Media, and aftewards called Cyrus the Great, because he was the founder of the Persian monarchy; but the king and people had no fear

of the besiegers, because the city was very strongly fortified, and well supplied with provisions, so that it seemed almost impossible it could be taken; but God had so ordained to punish the king for his wickedness, and thus it came to pass. It was the time of a public festival, and the people were too much occupied with their own enjoyments to keep a very strict watch on the movements of the enemy; so Cyrus took this opportunity to execute a stratagem that he had planned. He had caused a large reservoir to be prepared, into which he could divert the waters of the Euphrates, by means of its canals, leaving the bed of the river empty for some way, thus making a passage through which his army could march by night into the very heart of the city.

In this manner, on the very night that followed Daniel's interpretation of the miraculous writing, Babylon was taken, Belshazzar was killed in his palace, and his dominions being annexed to those of the Medes and Persians, became a part of the great Persian Empire established by Cyrus, after the death of Darius his uncle, whom he succeeded.

Daniel was held in great esteem by Darius, who restored him to his former high dignities;

a mark of favour that caused him to have many secret enemies, who conspired against his life, and were the occasion of his being thrown into the den of lions, when God so miraculously preserved him from injury.

When Cyrus ascended the throne of Persia, one of his first acts was to liberate the Hebrews, who had then been seventy years in captivity. He issued a decree that all who chose to do so might return to their own country, and rebuild their city and temple; and great numbers went back, although there were many who preferred remaining at Babylon, where they had formed connections and acquired property; besides which, all who were under seventy years of age had been born there. However, a great portion of the exiles gladly went back, and although the Samaritans did not like their re-establishment in the country, and for a great length of time succeeded in preventing them from rebuilding the city, it was eventually restored, and the sacred vessels and other things that had been taken away by Nebuchadnezzar from the Temple of Solomon, were sent back by the Persian king and placed in the new edifice that had been erected in its stead, but which was neither so large nor so magnificent, being a

plain stone building, more like a citadel than a temple. It was after their return from the Babylonish Captivity that the people of Judah were called Jews, and the country Judea.

They were not a free people, for they were vassals of the Persian Empire, and paid tribute to the kings of Persia for nearly two hundred years after their restoration, during which the sovereign authority at Jerusalem was held by the high-priests, who governed according to the Mosaic institutions; for the people were permitted to retain their own laws and follow the customs of their forefathers. It must be remembered that it was only the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin that were restored to their native land; for the kingdom of Israel was never re-established, and the people of the ten tribes that were conquered by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, were dispersed throughout Media and other provinces of Persia, where in course of time most of them probably became so mingled with other nations as not to be distinguished from them. But the distinction of tribes among the Jews gradually wore away from the period of the Captivity, although it did not entirely disappear till after the time of Our Saviour, who was "born of the tribe of Judah."

QUESTIONS ON READING XXIII.

Who was Daniel?

In what points did he resemble Joseph?

What rank did Daniel hold at Babylon?

When did he resign his high office?

Who was Belshazzar?

What was the character of Belshazzar?

On what occasion did he send for Daniel?

How did Daniel interpret the writing on the wall?

Was not Babylon in a state of siege at the time?

Who was the besieger?

Why were the king and people regardless of the enemy?

How was the city captured?

What was the fate of Belshazzar?

How was the kingdom ended?

What happened to Daniel after the fall of Babylon?

By whom were the Hebrews restored to liberty?

How long had they been in captivity?

What decree was issued by Cyrus on the release?

Did all the people avail themselves of this permission?

Why not?

When were the Hebrews first called Jews?

What name was given to their country after their restoration?

Were they a free people?

What was their political condition?

Which of the twelve tribes were re-established in their own land?

What became of the ten tribes first conquered?

READING XXIV.

REVOLUTIONS IN JUDEA.

It was about 184 years after the return of the Jews from the Babylonish Captivity, that Alexander the Great, King of Macedonia and Greece, invaded Asia with a large army in the year B. C. 334. By a succession of brilliant victories this renowned conqueror made himself the master of all Asia on this side of India, so that the whole of the Persian Empire, including Judea, fell under the dominion of the Greeks, an event that was foretold by the prophet Daniel, in the time of Nebuchadnezzar. After the total defeat and death of the king of Persia, Alexander, in making a progress through the conquered territories, paid a visit to Jerusalem, where the news of his approach caused great consternation, as the Jews were quite uncertain how they should be treated by their new sovereign. Anxious to conciliate his favour they threw open the gates, and the priests came out to meet him, habited in their robes of ceremony, the procession being

headed by the high priest, who received the conqueror with profound respect, and conducted him with much state to the Temple. This reception pleased the young monarch, who was not at that time more than 25 years of age; so when the sacrifices and other ceremonials were ended, he gave a magnificent entertainment to the principal men of the city, and confirmed the Jews in all the privileges they had enjoyed under the Persian Kings.

Alexander made Babylon the capital of his Eastern dominions, and would probably have restored that city to its ancient splendour, had his life been spared to complete the works which he began there; but he died suddenly about ten years after his first landing in Asia: and from that time Babylon, once the grandest city in the world, rapidly went to decay; so that in the fourth century of the Christian era it presented a melancholy picture of desolation, the words of the prophet Isaiah, who lived in the time of the last kings of Judah, being thus fulfilled:—

"And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be

dwelt in from generation to generation; neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there, neither shall the shepherds make their folds there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there, and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures, and owls shall dwell there."—*Isaiah* xiii. 19—21.

This prophecy was spoken before the Jews were led in captivity to Babylon, while the city was in all its glory—while its splendid palaces, its beautiful gardens, its magnificent temples, its lofty walls with their brazen gates that seemed to defy any human power to destroy them, were in all their strength and beauty; yet the words of the prophet were fulfilled in every particular, for the plain where Babylon stood, has for ages been covered for miles with mounds and scattered ruins, in which wild beasts and serpents make their abode; so that even the wandering Arabs of the desert do not set up their tents in that fearful waste, deserted by all of humankind.

After the death of Alexander, the generals who had assisted in his conquests divided his vast empire among them, and many wars and troubles arose in which the Jews had their full share, being subjected for 160 years to the oppressions of different rulers, till at length they were driven to open revolt in consequence of

the excessive tyranny of Antiochus, one of Alexander's successors, who had become king of Syria, and with the aid of a distinguished family called the Maccabees, who took the lead in the insurrection, they recovered their independence for a time.

Judas Maccabæus, a patriotic priest, assisted by his valiant brothers, conquered the Syrian generals, and rescued his nation from foreign dominion and became their ruler; but fearing the Jews were not sufficiently powerful to maintain their freedom, he sent to Rome to solicit the alliance of that state. The Romans had just completed the conquest of Greece, and readily agreed to afford protection to the people of Judea. Judas Maccabæus had fallen in the war, and was succeeded in turn by his two brothers, who united the dignity of sovereign prince with that of high-priest, and under whose government the country was blessed with some years of peace and happiness. The second brother of Judas Maccabæus was succeeded by his son John Hyrcanus, who completely established the independence of Judea. The Maccabee or Asmonean princes, as they were called from Asmon, one of their ancestors, continued to reign in succession for a period of ninety years, during which

the Jews enjoyed a high degree of prosperity, and it was then that the famous council was instituted, known by the name of the Sanhedrim, composed of seventy-one members, forming at once a parliament and a supreme court of law. The members were high-priests, elders, and such as were learned in the law, the latter being principally Pharisees, a sect that had lately appeared among the Jews, consisting principally of men of high birth and great wealth, who valued themselves on leading very strict and holy lives. They had, at this period, great influence in the government, which they contrived to augment to such a degree that, before the Roman conquest, all the affairs of the state were intrusted to their management; and they were still in high repute in the time of our Saviour, who took occasion to reprove their pride and arrogance in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, wherein it is shown, that, by boasting of our good deeds we do away with all their merit.

It was now about the time that the Romans were beginning to make great conquests in every part of the world. They had extended their empire over the whole of Greece, and had already taken many rich and important cities in

Syria, when the famous Roman general, Pompey the Great, took the command of the armies in Asia, and in consequence of some provocation given him by the Jewish rulers, he laid siege to Jerusalem. The city was at the time in a state of anarchy on account of a dispute between two brothers of the Asmonean family, Aristobulus, and Hyrcanus, as to which had the best right to the sovereignty, and as each had a party in his favour, the contention had assumed the form of a civil war, and the city was in a dreadful state of tumult. Both princes applied to the Roman general, who decided in favour of Hyrcanus; but Aristobulus held possession of the fortresses at Jerusalem and refused to give them up, on which Pompey invested the city, and the gates were soon thrown open to him by the friends of Hyrcanus. The opposite faction had shut themselves up within the precincts of the Temple, which was bravely defended for three months, when it was taken by storm, and a frightful massacre ensued, a great number of the priests being slain even before the altars. Pompey did not permit his soldiers to plunder the Temple, and he gave the government, with the dignity of high-priest, to Hyrcanus; but from that moment the Romans were the absolute rulers of

Judea, which, with the rest of Syria, was very soon declared a Roman province. All the chief cities were placed under the authority of Roman governors; the laws of Rome were established there; and heavy taxes and tribute were levied on the people, which were collected by a class of men called publicans, of whom we frequently read in the New Testament; therefore, it should be remembered that publicans among the Romans, were the collectors of tolls and taxes, and were generally disliked by the people, probably because they were often very arbitrary, and occasionally took more than was their due. Under the Roman government, however, the conquered people of the provinces were obliged to submit to much oppression, because the governors who were sent out to rule over them had absolute authority, and there were soldiers in every city to prevent any attempt at rebellion. The capture of Jerusalem took place about eight years before the first invasion of Britain by Julius Cæsar. Some time after the death of Cæsar, the famous Mark Antony went into Asia, and it was he who made Herod King of Judea, thus separating the sovereignty from the high-priesthood, for Herod was not a priest, but was the son of Antipater, a Jew, and a great military

commander, who had been of much service to Cæsar in his wars in Egypt, and on that account had been made Governor of Judea. After his death Herod was appointed Governor of Syria, and owing to the favour of Antony, which he purchased by large presents, he was invested with the title of king by Augustus Cæsar at Rome, B. C. 37. Herod was called the Great, not on account of his good deeds, for he was cruel and tyrannical, but for the magnificence of his public works, which were grand and extensive, and his ability in war and hunting. He rebuilt many cities that had been destroyed in the wars in various parts of Syria, and constructed fortresses, palaces, baths, aqueducts, and places for gymnastic exercises, and endowed them with revenues for their support in the manner of the Greeks. But the grandest of his works was the rebuilding of the Temple, which he pulled down and erected again in that costly and magnificent style in which it appeared in the time of our Saviour.

QUESTIONS ON READING XXIV.

How did Judea become subject to the Greeks?
How were the Jews treated by the conqueror?
What was the fate of the great city of Babylon?

Which of the prophets foretold its ruin?

What happened to the Jews at the death of Alexander?

Who was Judas Maccabæus?

What was the general state of Judea under the government of the Maccabees?

What was the Sanhedrim?

What were the Pharisees?

Which of the Roman generals laid siege to Jerusalem?

What was the result of the Roman invasion?

What were the publicans we read of in the New Testament?

At what period was Jerusalem taken by the Romans?

Who was Herod, and why was he made King of Judea?

Why was Herod called "the Great?

What was his grandest work?

NAZARETH. *Page* 133.

READING XXV.

THE COMING OF JESUS.

THE nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ took place in the last year of the reign of Herod the Great, and about the middle of that of Augustus Cæsar, the Roman Emperor. The Saviour of mankind was born at Bethlehem, which was then a large city, and was the birthplace of King David, and the place to which Ruth, the great-grandmother of that monarch, came with Naomi her mother-in-law from the land of Moab, and where her marriage with Boaz was celebrated. It was from King David, and consequently from Ruth, that Mary, the mother of Jesus, and also Joseph her husband, were descended: therefore is Christ sometimes called "the Son of David," as when in our prayers at church we say:—

"O, Son of David, have mercy upon us!"

All the circumstances attending the coming of the Lord upon the earth, the family of which he would be born, and the particular city in

which the great event would take place, were foretold by the prophets, even ages before they came to pass, and these prophecies were fulfilled in a most remarkable manner, for if the affairs of the nation had proceeded in their ordinary course, it would have been at Nazareth, which was a long way from Bethlehem, that Jesus Christ would have been born; but Bethlehem was the chosen city, and as God had appointed it so, His will was accomplished in the following manner.

The emperor sent an order from Rome to the governor of Judea to take an account of the people throughout the country, and cause their names to be registered in books, with a statement of the amount of property possessed by each individual, that the taxes might be levied accordingly. At Rome this was called taking the census: every man was obliged to go to the capital, and appear before the proper officers to make his declaration; and this was now to be done by the Jews, who, however, were not all to go to Jerusalem, but each individual was to repair to the chief city of his own tribe, and the city of the tribe of Judah, to which Mary the mother of Jesus, and her husband Joseph both belonged, was Bethlehem, and they were of

the family of King David, although at this time in very humble circumstances.

They resided at Nazareth, a small town situated in the northern part of Palestine, in a province then called Galilee, but now forming part of the government of Acre, under the dominion of the Turks.

Nazareth is a place of great interest to Christian travellers, as having been the abode of our blessed Saviour for many years, ere he began to make known his divine mission. It is now only a poor village, surrounded by barren mountains, which furnish abundance of limestone, so that the houses are all built of that material, and are only one story high with flat roofs, which is the usual style of domestic architecture in the East. It stands, however, in a fertile valley, where there are good pastures of long verdant grass, and pleasant gardens separated from each other by hedgerows of prickly pear; whilst here and there a delightful shade may be found under the spreading branches of the luxuriant fig-tree.

Nazareth was about eighty miles from Bethlehem, a long and dangerous journey; for the country was infested with robbers, so that the only mode of travelling with any degree of

security was in caravans or large companies; therefore people did not undertake such journeys unless some particular business obliged them to do so; and this makes it the more remarkable, that just before the Saviour's birth there should have occurred a necessity for her of whom he was to be born, to repair to the distant city of Bethlehem, the very place which had been appointed so long beforehand for the first appearance of the Lord upon the earth in the form of man.

When Mary and her husband arrived at Bethlehem, the city was so crowded with strangers who had come there on the same business as themselves, that every room at the inn was occupied, and the best accommodation that could be afforded them was a stable, where the blessed Virgin Mary was content to repose after the fatigue of her journey; and thus it was that the infant Jesus was born in a stable, and was laid on straw in a manger, the best bed that could at the moment be obtained. There can be no doubt that if it had been the pleasure of the Lord to enter the world under the gilded roof of a palace, it would have been so; but in this, as in every other act of his life, he set us an example of humility, and taught us a wholesome

lesson not to judge of worth by outward appearances.

The birth of Christ was first revealed to some shepherds, who were keeping watch over their flocks on that eventful night, the first and real Christmas Eve, in a field not far from the city, it being the custom for the sheep to remain all night in the field, and for the shepherds, who had little cottages on the spot, to take turns in watching and guarding the flocks from wild beasts and robbers; and they relieved each other four times during the night, so that in speaking of the time it was not unusual to say, in the first, second, third, or fourth watch, as the case might be, instead of naming the hour as we do. Thus we read:—

"And about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea."—*St. Mark* vi. 48.

To those favoured shepherds the news of the Saviour's birth was announced by an angel, who appeared to them, amidst a glorious light, during their night watch, saying,—

"Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people."

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

The angel also told them where they would find the holy Infant; so they went to Bethlehem to worship him, and thus were the first to believe in and welcome the coming of Jesus.

QUESTIONS ON READING XXV.

When did the birth of our Saviour take place?

Where was He born?

Why is Jesus sometimes called the Son of David?

How did it come to pass that Jesus was born at Bethlehem?

Where did Mary, His mother, and her husband reside?

To whom was the birth of the Saviour first revealed?

How was the intelligence announced?

What did the shepherds do on hearing the glad tidings?

READING XXVI.

THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI.

WHILE the infant Jesus was still lying in his humble cradle at the inn in Bethlehem, there came from the East three persons, supposed to have been either Persians or Arabians, to bring him presents and to worship him. These men were called Magi, or wise men, and they belonged to a sect of philosophers who were held in high esteem on account of their great learning, and lived together in colleges, devoting themselves to the study of different sciences, especially those of astronomy and natural philosophy. From Magi we derive our word magician, which at first meant nothing more than a wise and learned man; but in course of time was more generally used to signify an evil sorcerer, or one who practised the art of magic. The colleges of the Magi were principally in Persia and Arabia; therefore it is supposed the worshippers in question came from one of those countries, having learned by supernatural

means that the long-promised Messiah had at length come upon the earth in the likeness of a little child. They had seen a wondrous light in the heavens, having the appearance of a blazing star of great magnitude, which they knew to be a sign of the coming of the Lord: therefore they prepared valuable offerings of gold, myrrh, and frankincense, to lay before him, and set forth in the direction of the sign they had observed, without knowing whither they were going, or what would be the extent of their journey; yet feeling no doubt that they should find him whom they sought, and that God, who had sent the sign to give them intelligence of the birth of Christ, would also guide them to his presence. Nor were they disappointed; for, on their arrival at Jerusalem, the large bright star again appeared, and moved before them towards Bethlehem, where it descended lower in the air, and stood still, directly over the house where Jesus was born, and, with his mother, was yet remaining. At Jerusalem they had made known the object of their journey, which had been told to Herod the king, who was much alarmed at what he heard; for he well knew it had been prophesied by those who were gifted with more than human know-

ledge, that one should be born in the city of David, who would be greater than all the kings of the earth, and he began to fear this prophecy was now fulfilled. His proud heart could not brook the thought that there should be any prince in Judea greater than himself, therefore he resolved to destroy the child; wickedly presuming that he might by that means defeat the purpose of the Almighty, even as Pharaoh thought respecting Moses; and following the example of that tyrant, he issued a cruel mandate that all the children under two years of age in Bethlehem and its vicinity should be put to death, and thus he hoped to insure the destruction of the one he dreaded. First, however, he tried to discover the real object of his jealous fears by sending for the wise men, and desiring them to let him know when they had found the child, that he also might go and worship him; and as they suspected nothing of his wicked intention they promised to do so.

When they reached Bethlehem, and saw the heavenly light hovering over one particular house, they knew it was there they should find him they were seeking; so they went in, and on seeing the infant Christ they bowed down before him till their foreheads touched the

ground, such being the customary mode of saluting kings and princes among all the Eastern nations. Then they opened their bags and presented their costly gifts, another Oriental custom; for in those countries it was then, and is still, considered disrespectful to visit a superior without carrying him a present, the richness of which is usually regulated by his rank and consequence; therefore the offerings of the Magi consisted of the most valuable productions of the country, as they were made to one who was far above all earthly princes. Having performed their act of adoration, the strangers departed to return again to their own land; but they did not go back to Jerusalem, for God had warned them in a dream not to give the king the information he desired; so they went by another road, and Herod was still ignorant where the holy infant was to be found. It was then he gave the barbarous command that deprived many parents of their innocent babes by a cruel death; yet how needlessly did he incur this weight of guilt! How foolish, as well as wicked, was the conduct that added a crime of such magnitude to the sins he was soon to answer for at the judgment seat of God! While many a helpless infant was sacrificed to the jealousy of

King Herod, he against whom the plot was laid was conveyed into Egypt by his mother and her husband, who remained there till after the death of Herod; when they returned to their own city of Nazareth, where Jesus dwelt with them until the time appointed for the commencement of his divine mission, which was when he had been among mankind about thirty years.

QUESTIONS ON READING XXVI.

What were the Magi?

How had the coming of Christ upon earth been made known to them?

What were the offerings they brought?

How did they find the infant Jesus at Bethlehem?

Why did Herod send for the Magi?

How was the act of adoration performed?

Why did the wise men return home by a different road?

What did Herod do when he found the wise men had departed?

How was his wicked design frustrated?

READING XXVII.

THE RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION.

THE life and death of our Saviour was written by four of his disciples at different times, each telling the things he had himself seen, and the words he had himself heard. These four historians are called the Evangelists, and their writings the four Gospels. The names of the disciples were Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

It is St. Luke who gives us the fullest and most particular account of the resurrection of Christ; that is, of his rising again to life on the third day after he was crucified, and of his ascending to Heaven in the sight of many persons who had seen and conversed with him after he had risen from the tomb. It was difficult for those who had seen him die upon the cross to believe that they should behold him again alive, therefore when Mary Magdalene and the other women to whom he first appeared, after he had lain three days in the sepulchre, went and told the Apostles they had seen Jesus, their words

were not believed, so impossible did it seem to every one that he whose death and burial they had witnessed, should be alive and walking on the earth.

Nevertheless the report made a great sensation amongst them, and they sought one another to talk about it, although they were of opinion the women must have been deceived. On that same day two of the disciples were going together to Emmaus, a small village about seven miles from Jerusalem; and as they walked along the road, their discourse naturally turned upon the subject that interested them so deeply, and of which they scarcely dared to speak in Jerusalem, where they were surrounded by the enemies of Christ, who looked with suspicion on those who had been amongst his followers. They were conversing in sadness of the crucifixion, when they were joined by a third traveller, who appeared to them as a stranger, for though it was Jesus himself, their own dear Lord and Master, they knew him not, for, as St. Luke says, "their eyes were holden," by which we may suppose that his outward form was changed, not in reality, but to their vision, so that they might not recognize him at once. Then he asked them what made them look so

sorrowful, which caused them to wonder very much, as they thought everybody must know of the sad events that had taken place; however, they told him all, and he went on talking with them even of his own death until they came to the village, when he seemed about to leave them and proceed on his way; but they were so delighted with his company that they invited him to sup with them and stay till the morning, as it was getting late. It was while they were at supper, that the cause, whatever it might be, that had prevented them from knowing him was removed, and they saw, with joy and wonder, that it was Jesus himself who was sitting at meat with them as he used to do, and that the story of his return to life was no idle dream, but a wondrous reality. Having thus revealed himself, he blessed the bread and gave them to eat as at the supper of the sacrament, and then he disappeared from their sight. Transported with joy they did not stay that night at the village as they had intended, but set off immediately to Jerusalem to convey the glad tidings to their brethren in that city; and there they found the eleven Apostles gathered together talking of what they had already heard concerning the rising of Christ from the tomb. Eagerly did

they listen to the news brought by the two who had actually seen and eaten bread with him: still they were doubtful, thinking it might be a delusion, when all their doubts were set at rest by Jesus himself, who suddenly appeared amongst them, no one knowing how or whence he came. Thus he showed himself at various times, and in different places, to above five hundred persons; and at last, having done all he had to do on earth, he led a few of his chosen disciples to a place called Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, where he gave them his last instructions, and his final blessing, then, being enveloped in a cloud, he ascended to Heaven before their eyes.

QUESTIONS ON READING XXVII.

Who were the Evangelists?

Which of these gives the fullest account of Christ's resurrection?

What is meant by the resurrection?

To whom did Jesus first appear after he rose from the tomb?

What happened to two of the disciples on that day?

How did the two disciples make known that Christ had risen from the dead?

What happened while they were relating the news?

Whence did the Ascension take place?

READING XXVIII.

THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN.

"Judge not, that ye be not judged.

"For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

"And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" *St. Matthew* vii. 1—3.

AMONG the many beautiful lessons taught us by Jesus Christ, is that of judging kindly of one another; for he knew how apt we all are to see, and even to magnify, the faults of others, while we either totally overlook our own, or view them through a very softening medium, however great and glaring they may in reality be. This was the meaning of our Lord when he said "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" for in the Hebrew language a "mote in the eye" is a phrase used to express some little fault either of temper, disposition, or conduct; whereas "a beam in the

eye" signifies a very great failing indeed; consequently the words of Jesus were intended as a reproof to those who indulge in a bad habit of censuring their neighbours for trifling errors, forgetting how often they are themselves guilty of greater ones.

In young people, especially, there is often a tendency to fall into this mistake; not perhaps from a bad disposition, but merely for want of thought. Is it not so, reader? Do you not frequently blame your companions for ill humour, pride, selfishness, or some other bad quality you think you perceive in them without considering whether you are free from these faults yourself? If you answer the question candidly you will say, "Yes, I have often done so; I have said, 'Such a one is proud and ill-tempered; I will not play with him or with her any more.'" Now a little reflection will show you that in speaking thus, you are exhibiting those very failings which, in another, person are so distasteful to you; for it is a proof of ill temper to say you will not play with your companion again, and a proof of pride to suppose you are so much better than the person you are complaining of.

It is this kind of pride which is so justly con-

demned by Our Saviour in his beautiful parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, who, he tells us, went at the same time into the Temple to pray. The haughty Pharisee, who, as before stated, belonged to a noble class among the Jews, boasted in his prayers of his own goodness, giving thanks to God that he was so much better in every respect than the publican then present; and thus, like many other people, he was blind to his own defects, while he sought for and magnified those of his neighbours; saying, "Lord, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, or even as this publican." The publican, on the contrary, being a humble-minded man, was sensible of his own deficiencies, knowing that even the best people in the world are not free from sin, and that we all have need to pray for pardon and indulgence. He therefore addressed himself to the Almighty with the deepest humility, neither praising himself nor blaming others, but entreating forgiveness in these simple words, "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner." It has already been explained that the publicans employed under the Roman government were not innkeepers, but the collectors of the revenues; that is, the taxes on the produce of

the land, the duties and customs on goods exported or imported, and the tolls at the gates and bridges. In short, they were similar to our custom-house officers, tax-gatherers, and toll-keepers; and although many of them were Jews, they were generally disliked and treated with contempt, partly because they held their offices under the Romans, and partly because they were looked upon as men who aided in extorting money from their fellow-countrymen for the benefit of their conquerors. Yet Jesus tells us that this despised and humble individual who took no merit whatever to himself, but confessed his own unworthiness, and entreated pardon for his sins, found more favour in the sight of God than the proud, self-sufficient man, who fancied he had no sins to be forgiven; "for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

It is very wrong, very presumptuous, to think we have fewer faults than other people; for no one can be perfect; and all we can do is to be as good as we can, and, instead of looking out for the errors of our neighbours, endeavour to correct our own.

Never speak ill of your companions, but re-

member that if you make allowances for their faults, they will make allowances for yours. All have their good qualities as well as their bad ones; and you should always be disposed to think and speak of the amiable points rather than the unamiable ones in the conduct of your friends, and to judge of them accordingly; "For with what judgment ye judge," saith Jesus, "ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

QUESTIONS ON READING XXVIII.

Relate the parable of the Pharisee and Publican?

What were the duties of a publican under the Roman government?

Why were they despised by the people generally?

READING XXIX.

PREVARICATION.

"The lips of truth shall be established for ever; but a lying tongue is but for a moment." *Proverbs* xii. 19.

THERE is nothing more mean, more utterly contemptible than falsehood. A liar can neither be loved nor trusted. Every one looks on him with suspicion; and no one puts entire faith in what he says, even when he does speak truth.

And what is falsehood? Let us not deceive ourselves on this point, for we may be guilty of a lie without uttering a word that is untrue: but God makes no distinction between those who deceive by words, and those who deceive by any other means; both are liars in his sight, and they are equally unworthy of the confidence of their friends.

A man walking one day in his orchard with his son, saw a large branch of one of his choicest fruit trees lying on the ground. The wind had been boisterous during the night and had done much damage among the smaller

trees, so that the man naturally supposed it had injured this great tree also; therefore he took up the fallen bough in his hand and said, "The wind was very high in the night, but should you have thought it would have broken down so stout a branch as this?" "No, that I should not," was the ready reply. It was true in words, but false in meaning; for the wind had not broken the branch, but that deceitful boy had himself broken it by climbing up the tree to get a pear, which he had been forbidden to do; therefore he sought to hide his fault by allowing his father to continue in his mistake, and he satisfied his conscience by saying, "I said nothing but what was true; I certainly never should have thought the wind would have blown it down." Now, ask yourself if this boy had not as much told a lie as if he had said, "I did not break the branch—the wind did it." Certainly he had; for that was what he meant his father to understand by his answer, that he might escape the punishment due to his disobedience.

The father afterwards discovered the truth, and the boy was doubly punished, since to the sin of disobedience he had added that of falsehood, or prevarication, which, in the eyes of

God, are the same. But was this temporary punishment the worst consequence of his fault? No. He had forfeited the confidence of his parents; they could no longer trust his word; and when any mischief was done by an unknown hand he was always suspected, and often indeed was he mortified at finding that no credit was given to his word of denial, however innocent he might be of the act laid to his charge. A lie may answer the present purpose, but it invariably brings shame and disgrace on the person who has recourse to it; for if one falsehood passes undiscovered, another is sure to be detected, and then where is the advantage of it?

The little difference that exists between direct falsehood and prevarication, is fully shown in the story of Ananias, which is related in the fifth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

Many of the Christians at Jerusalem, anxious to extend the true faith, entered into an agreement to sell all they had and place the money in the hands of the Apostle Peter, who was to distribute to each man as much as was needful for his support; so that every one being maintained out of this common fund, might be able to devote his whole time to the teaching of Chris-

tianity. All who belonged to this community were thus placed upon an equality, those who had possessed much receiving no more than those who had possessed little; but no man was obliged to join the society unless he chose, therefore no wrong was done to any one; for, if a rich man sold his estate for that purpose, and gave up his worldly enjoyments for the sake of promoting the Christian religion, he did it of his own free will, and was bound to abide by the compact thus made with the rest of the brethren.

Among those who joined this fraternity was one named Ananias, who sold his land under pretence of aiding the society, but, in reality, with a sordid view to his own benefit; for instead of putting all the money into the common stock, he secretly kept back a part of it, so that he might get a share of the fund, and enjoy his own property besides, which was at once an act of fraud, and a mark of disrespect towards the religion he professed to venerate.

Ananias did not perhaps say to Peter in words, "This is all I have;" but as he knew the rules and intent of the community, he thought that the apostle would suspect nothing about the matter, therefore he acted a lie, although

his tongue was silent: and God did not hold him less guilty than if he had spoken it, as we may know by the terrible punishment that was inflicted upon him, and also upon his wife, who had assisted in the deception; for they were both suddenly deprived of life even at the moment of committing the sin; and they were carried out dead from the apostle's presence; an awful warning to those who, to answer some unworthy end, turn from the straight and easy path of truth into the crooked ways of falsehood.

QUESTIONS ON READING XXIX.

What measures were adopted at Jerusalem by the Apostle Peter to promote the Christian faith?

What were the rules of the society respecting property?

How were the funds distributed?

What was the fraud committed by Ananias and his wife?

How were they punished?

READING XXX.

PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS.

MANY of the most delightful lessons taught by Jesus Christ to his disciples, and intended for the instruction and guidance of all future generations, were in the form of interesting stories, called parables; a parable being a little narrative which has another meaning besides that which is expressed, like the short stories usually called fables.

In some of these parables, the Saviour pointed out our duty towards God; in others, he endeavoured to teach us our duty towards our neighbours: but in reading them we must always remember that the people to whom they were addressed lived in a country where all the usages were entirely different from those of Europeans, so that we constantly meet with allusions to manners and customs that are strange to us, although they were quite familiar to the auditors of the Divine Teacher. For instance, we read of anointing people with

ointment; but we should scarcely understand the meaning of such a ceremony, unless it had been explained to us that it was customary among the Jews, and, indeed, among most oriental nations, when a visitor came to a house, for a servant to bring sweet-scented oil or ointment in a vase or box of alabaster, and rub it over his head and beard to give them an agreeable perfume; and this was looked upon as a mark of welcome and respect. Some of these ointments were very costly; and rich people spent large sums of money in such luxuries, consequently the trade in oils and perfumes was both extensive and lucrative. Again, in the parable of the Ten Virgins, the point of the story turns on the marriage customs prevalent in the East, which are very different from those observed amongst us on such occasions. The bride is always conducted in procession to her new abode; and this ceremonial in the time of Our Saviour frequently took place at night, by torch-light, every one carrying a lamp or a torch to light the way, and give the cavalcade a brilliant appearance. All the friends and relatives of both parties are expected to attend, and many of them, instead of going to the house where the wedding party is assembled,

join the procession on its way to the residence of the bridegroom, who thus triumphantly carries home his wife from her father's house to his own, where a great entertainment is prepared for the whole company.

In the story told by our Lord, the ten virgins are supposed to be young friends of the bride who have been invited to the wedding, and go out with their lamps lighted to await the coming of the procession that they may take their places in the joyous train; but as the time of its setting forth was uncertain, and it would not have been seemly to take a part in it without their lights, five of the damsels had prudently taken a little oil with them to trim the lamps in case of delay; but the others, thoughtless and improvident, neglected this precaution, and the consequence was that their lamps went out; and while they were running about to find a shop where they might buy some oil to replenish them, the procession passed by, and was joined by their wiser companions. As soon as they had obtained a supply of oil, and relighted their lamps, the careless maidens hastened to the bridegroom's house; but it was too late, for the company had sat down to supper, and the doors were closed, not to be opened again; for it was

supposed that all who had been invited would take care to be in time, and the servants were ordered to keep the doors shut that no strangers might intrude themselves upon the party.

This parable was intended to show that we should all take care to be ready whenever it shall please the Almighty to summon us to his presence; for the time of our existence is uncertain, and the young as well as the old may be summoned from this world at any moment. Let us, then, always try to do that which is right; let us be careful not to neglect any duty that God has commanded us to perform, lest the gates of heaven should be closed against us, as the doors of the bridegroom's house were shut against the maidens, who, by their own negligence, found themselves at the last moment without the light that would have lighted them to the marriage supper.

QUESTIONS ON READING XXX.

Relate the parable of the Ten Virgins.
Explain the meaning of this parable.

READING XXXI.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

"Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

"This is the first and great commandment.

"And the second is like unto it: thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." *St. Matthew* **xxii. 37—39.**

THERE can be no doubt that we are sent into the world to do all the good we possibly can one for another. We are not born to act, to think, or to feel for ourselves alone, but to assist our fellow-creatures as far as it lies in our power, and to do unto others as we would that they should do unto us. In these few words is contained the whole sum and substance of our social duties; that is, our duties towards each other; and the best way of keeping the commandments is, to act on this simple principle.

No one would then speak ill of another, because he would not like others to speak ill of him; no one would steal, for he would not like his property to be stolen; and thus it would be

in all the concerns of life, every one acting kindly towards his neighbour, on the principle that he would wish his neighbour to act kindly towards himself. The word neighbour, in this sense, is not confined to those who live in the same street, the same village, the same town, or even the same country, but it refers to every one with whom we are brought into association, whether he be from east, west, north, or south; therefore, whoever needs our services is to be considered as our neighbour. And this view of the case is beautifully exemplified in the parable of the Good Samaritan, which was related by Jesus in reply to one who asked him this question—"Who is my neighbour?" It has already been explained that the Samaritans were the colonists who were settled in the country when the Jews were conquered and expelled by the Assyrians; and it was they who opposed the rebuilding of the temple after the Babylonish captivity; therefore the Jews looked upon them as enemies, and held no communication with them. Still, when the good Samaritan, in the parable, saw a Jew in trouble he thought not of the enmity between them, but did everything in his power to relieve and comfort him. The unfortunate person in ques-

tion was an inhabitant of Jerusalem, who had occasion to make a journey to Jericho, a distance of about eighteen miles; the road to which lay through a wild uncultivated district infested by robbers, who sometimes attacked a lonely traveller, even though he might be a poor man, for the sake of taking his clothes, as the loose flowing garments that are worn in the East will do for one man as well as another. This misfortune befel the Jew, who was not only robbed of his clothing, but was severely wounded, so that he remained lying in the road in a state of insensibility. Presently there came by a priest, who, seeing what had happened, hurried on as fast as he could, for he thought the robbers might not be far off, and that if he stopped to render any assistance to the wounded man, he might fall into their hands himself; so he left the poor fellow to his fate, and proceeded on his way with all possible speed, thinking only of his own safety. Shortly afterwards there came a Levite, who, with equal selfishness, passed on hastily, all feelings of charity being lost in his fear of the robbers. Now the priest and the Levite were fellow-countrymen of him who was wounded; they were members of the same community, and inhabitants of the same city;

yet the poor man might have died for want of assistance had not chance sent a stranger that way, one of the hated Samaritans, from whom a Jew could scarcely expect to receive kindness, so great was the dislike these two nations had towards each other. The good Samaritan, however, seeing a fellow-creature in distress, did not stop to inquire whether he was a friend or a foe; compassion for his unfortunate condition was the only emotion he felt; and regardless of the danger to which he was exposing himself, he bound up the wounds of the injured man, and carefully placing him on his own horse, conveyed him to an inn or caravanserai, and left him in the care of the master, to whom he gave some money for his immediate necessities, saying, "Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again I will repay thee."

When Jesus had finished the story, he turned to him who had asked the question "Who is my neighbour?" and said, "Which of these three thinkest thou was neighbour to him that fell among thieves?" And the questioner answered, "He that showed mercy on him;" to which Jesus assented, saying, "Go thou and do likewise."

Let us bear this lesson constantly in mind, and never neglect to do a kind action when it is in our power; for this is our duty towards our neighbour, and is enjoined by our Lord and Saviour in these words, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."

QUESTIONS ON READING XXXI.

What was the parable related by our Saviour in answer to the man who said to him "Who is my neighbour?"

What is the meaning of "neighbour" in this sense?

What is the lesson taught in this parable?

Do you remember who the Samaritans were, and why they were disliked by the Jews?

READING XXXII.

THE FALL OF JERUSALEM.

About thirty-seven years after the death of Christ, the judgment of God fell upon the city of Jerusalem, where the Saviour of mankind had been so unworthily treated; and upon the Jewish nation, whose sinful disbelief had been the cause of his sufferings. The events that led to the destruction of Jerusalem were these. During the reign of the wicked emperor Nero, at Rome, all the countries that were under the Roman government were subjected to the most cruel oppressions; for many of their rulers, imitating the example of their master, set no bounds to their rapacity, and took the most unjust means of enriching themselves at the expense of the people, while even those who were inclined to govern with moderation were obliged to raise enormous sums of money by increasing the taxes, in order to furnish the imperial tyrant with the means of indulging his extravagant propensities. The consequence

was, that insurrections arose in several of the provinces, and it was on this occasion that the revolt took place in Britain, headed by the celebrated Queen Boadicea, whose tragical story is so familiar to every reader of English history.

About this time a Roman, named Florus, was appointed to the government of Judea; and although the Jews had been much oppressed by former rulers, the tyranny of this man greatly exceeded that of all who had gone before him.

The country had long been in a state of disorder. The native princes had no power to act in opposition to the Roman authorities, and the laws were so ill observed, that the roads in every direction were infested with banditti, and the most daring robberies were committed in the cities in open daylight. These enormities were encouraged by the new governor Florus, who did not scruple to receive from the robbers a share of their spoils, so that they were secure from punishment. At length the miseries of the people became so intolerable, that seditions arose in various places, which ended in a general rebellion, and thus was commenced the last war of the Jews. The Roman army was under the command of the great general Vespasian;

who in his younger days had distinguished himself by his conquests in Britain; and as the greater part of his life had been spent in warfare, the emperor thought he was the fittest person to put down this formidable rebellion in Judea. He was accompanied by his son Titus, who was also a great commander; and several cities were besieged and taken with much bloodshed, for the Jews were a brave people, although not equal to the Romans in the art of war.

The two generals were preparing to lay siege to Jerusalem when news arrived of disturbances at Rome, and the miserable death of the tyrant; on which the soldiers elected Vespasian emperor, and he departed immediately for Italy, leaving Titus to carry on the siege.

The city had been considerably enlarged by the erection of new buildings since it had come into the possession of the Romans, and it was fortified with three strong walls, except in those parts where the natural defences made artificial ones unnecessary. The streets were narrow, as they are in most eastern cities, with dead walls on each side, and doors opening into the courts of the houses; for none of the rooms were visible from without, but were built around three sides of an open area called the court, which

usually had a sort of colonnade running around it, with a gallery above lightly roofed. The lower apartments were entered by the colonnade and the upper ones from the gallery, which was reached by a flight of steps from the court, for there were no stairs inside the houses. The court was sometimes used for wedding feasts and large entertainments, being strewed on such occasions with mats and carpets, and covered with a temporary awning as a shelter from the heat of the sun.

At the time when Titus began the siege, the city was in a dreadful state of anarchy, owing to the quarrels of certain ambitious men as to which of them should hold the chief authority; and as each of them had his partizans, the people within the walls of Jerusalem were fighting against each other, instead of uniting their efforts to defend their newly recovered liberty. It was the feast of the Passover too, a time when the city was crowded to excess, as it was one of the religious duties of the Jews to go up to the capital at the period of that festival and make an offering at the Temple, where the priests from all parts of Judea were assembled. These combined circumstances gave the Romans great advantage; and after about three weeks

of almost incessant fighting, the lower city was taken, and that part which contained the Temple, the palace, and the other noble buildings was closely invested, for that also was surrounded by a strong and lofty wall. Titus now made offers of peace and pardon; but his overtures were rejected by those bad men who had stirred up the civil war, and who now threatened with death any one who should attempt to leave the city in order to profit by the clemency of the Roman commander; yet, notwithstanding this prohibition, some there were who found means to escape and were permitted by Titus to go away where they pleased. At length the besieged, reduced to the greatest extremity for want of provisions, became unable to make any effectual resistance, and the upper city was taken by storm, and thousands of the wretched inhabitants put to the sword. Great numbers of priests were slain at the altars in the act of performing sacrifices, and the Temple itself, after being plundered, was set on fire, and all that was not consumed by the flames was razed to the ground: thus fulfilling the prediction of our Saviour, "Verily, I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down." The chief

ornaments of the Temple were taken by Titus himself, and displayed in his triumphal procession on his return to Rome, where a magnificent arch was also erected to commemorate his victories, which is still standing, one of the grandest relics of the ancient capital of the Roman Empire.

The fate of the people of Jerusalem who survived the fall of their city was miserable in the extreme. Numbers were put to death in various ways, whilst others were sent to the mines in Egypt, and the rest sold for slaves into different countries. Thus were the people of Israel dispossessed for ever of the land which God had given to their forefathers; thus was their kingdom finally destroyed, and their nation scattered abroad into every part of the world.

It is now nearly eighteen hundred years since the fall of the Jewish nation; yet, although the Jews have long been a numerous and wealthy people in almost every civilized country on the face of the earth, they have remained disunited; and as they are everywhere looked upon as aliens, they cannot properly be said to have a country of their own.

QUESTIONS ON READING XXXII.

When was Jerusalem destroyed?
What led to its destruction?
Who was Florus?
What was the state of Judea under his government?
What was the consequence of the people's suffering?
Who were the commanders of the Roman army?
What had caused disturbances within the city when Titus laid siege to it?
Why was it more crowded than usual?
How long did the fighting continue?
What was the result of the siege?
What was the fate of the people?

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